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THE SINGING CHURCH  
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WHEELS OF  
WIND  
ON

# THE SINGING CHURCH

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THE HYMNS IT WROTE AND SANG

By

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MUSIC IN WORK AND WORSHIP  
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CHURCH MUSIC



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THE SINGING CHURCH

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*“Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

(EPH. 5: 18, 19.)



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## P R E F A C E

IN PREPARING this discussion of the Christian hymn, it has been my ambition, not to be pre-eminently scholarly, but rather to be pre-eminently helpful. The current treatment of this phase of church worship is quite sufficiently thorough in its literary analysis and historical research; there is nothing but praise for this aspect of the study of the hymn in the many excellent treatises in America as well as in England.

The fathers of American hymnology, Professors Austin Phelps and Edwards A. Parks and Rev. Daniel L. Furber, set a good example to later hymnologists in their *Hymns and Choirs* in laying stress on the thought and sentiment of the hymns and in devoting nearly one-third of their study to "The Dignity and the Methods of Worship in Song," discussing choirs, congregational singing, organs, and many other practical phases in the use of hymns. They gave little consideration to the historicity of individual hymns; that viewpoint had not risen above the horizon.

Later works have given more attention to the historical background. The work of Dr. Louis F. Benson, the greatest hymnologist America has produced, cannot be too highly commended for its scholarly thoroughness and indefatigable research. His *The English Hymn* and *The Hymnody of the Christian Church* should be found in the library of every minister. Other valuable American treatises on hymns are Ninde's *Story of the American Hymn*, Gilman's *Evolution of the English Hymn*, Reeves' *The Hymn as Literature*, Marks' *Rise and Growth of English Hymnody*, and Tillet's *Our Hymns and Their Authors*, all of which are most helpful and illuminating discussions bearing on the literary and historical

aspects of Christian hymns. On the other side of the sea are other most valuable studies of the hymn. Horder's *The Hymn Lover* is particularly fresh and inspiring. Others are instructive regarding the individual hymns, such as Josiah Miller's *Singers and Songs of the Church*, John Telford's *The Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated* and *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*, and W. T. Stead's *Hymns That Have Helped*. Supreme above them all is Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, which is a stupendous work of vast comprehensiveness and indefatigable industry, the last word in the history and critical study of Christian hymns of all lands and all Christian ages.

The justification of another survey of the field lies in the fact that all these admirable books confine themselves to the purely literary and historical data regarding each hymn, with side glances in only a few cases at the practical values involved. While the fundamental urge of expressing religious emotions back of Christian hymns is not denied or even deprecated, the emotional values are not developed or stressed.

In order to assure this lacking element of practical helpfulness, this discussion includes four chapters on the purposeful use of hymns in the work of the Church.

It is proper that I should recognize the sympathetic and cordial helpfulness in an advisory way of Professor Herman von Berge, my editorial associate in the musical work to which I have devoted the larger part of my life. His scholarship and wide practical experience, both as pastor and theological seminary professor, have helped me solve some problems that rather daunted me. Acknowledgment is also due to my son, Rev. Edward H. Lorenz, and to Mrs. F. C. Goodlin, my private secretary, in typing and proofreading my longhand manuscript. Last but not least, the co-operation of my brother, Dr. D. E. Lorenz, organizer of the church of the Good Shepherd in New York City and its pastor for thirty-four years, in the indexing and proofreading, calls for grateful recognition. Only an experienced author can fully measure the value of such efficient helpers.

E. S. L.

Dayton Ohio.



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## INTRODUCTION

### THE PLACE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE HYMN

THE CHURCH OF GOD has been and is a singing church. This was true in the antediluvian centuries, which was its seminal period, for some of its canticles have survived. In its pupal stage, the Old Testament church life developed both the form and the content of the future hymnody.

To the solo forms of the preceding period, the Mosaic social and religious organization now adds both the choral and the congregational forms of vocal worship. To the fear and awe of previous generations, the Christian development of the Church of God has added the intimate phases of adoration, of gratitude, of love, based on consciousness of communion with the Triune Deity.

Outside of the Israelitish Church and its Christian consummation, there has been little or no song in religious worship. The heathen deities were honored only with rude vocal and instrumental noises made by temple singers and players. It is the Church of God under all dispensations which was a singing church. To this day the voice of sacred song is practically absent from heathen temple.

*The Impulse to Sing Is Constitutional in Man.* In the beginning, song was a spontaneous expression of feeling, being based on man's original constitution as fully as breathing or speaking. Its exercise did not rise high enough in the consciousness of men, nor so conspicuously affect the current of

events, that account should be made of it in the sketchy outlines of the early history of the race. None the less do we hear unrelated echoes from Lamech and Jubal,<sup>1</sup> and from Laban's complaint that Jacob gave him no opportunity to bid farewell "with songs, with tabret, and with harp."<sup>2</sup> During the great Exodus, these echoes multiply and become more articulate at the Red Sea,<sup>3</sup> at the digging of the well at Beer,<sup>4</sup> about the walls of Jericho,<sup>5</sup> Deborah,<sup>6</sup> Barak,<sup>7</sup> and Hannah,<sup>8</sup> and the school of the prophets,<sup>9</sup> developing a grand *crescendo* which culminates in the full-voiced chorus and orchestra of the times of David and Solomon.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly all these were surviving manifestations of the unbroken tide of social and religious song that flowed on through the ages. The Hebrew church carried on the model constructed by the organizing instinct of Samuel and the musical and literary genius of David, through the succeeding ages, and passed on the devotional impulse to the Christian Church.

*Biblical Authority for the Singing of Hymns.* If any authority for the use of hymns were needed beyond the unfailing urge of a sanctified soul to find expression for its spiritual experiences and to persuade other souls to seek a like blessed privilege, there would be ample provision in the development of religious song in the Jewish church, in the participation of Jesus in such a song at so high a peak of religious solemnity as the institution of "The Lord's Supper,"<sup>11</sup> in the use of song by the Apostles in their private meetings and in unusual personal experiences from the very beginning,<sup>12</sup> in the exhortations of Paul<sup>13</sup> and James,<sup>14</sup> and in the choral scenes of the great Apocalypse.<sup>15</sup>

*The Use of Hymns in the Development of the Christian Church.* But the use God has made of song through the succeeding centuries of the development of the Christian Church, is an even more striking indication of the high importance placed upon sacred song by the divine mind.

The results of the thoughtful use of song, both in ancient

## INTRODUCTION

times and the recent past, abundantly illustrate its value and are genuine laboratory proof of its power in deepening the spirituality of individuals, of communities, and even of nations. The hymns of Huss and of Luther, the psalmody of Calvin and of Knox, the preparatory effect of the hymns of Watts for the great Second Reformation in England and its intensification by the hymns of the Wesleys, the joyous singing of rudely fashioned psalms and the newly introduced hymns in the Great Awakening in New England, the great evangelistic movement in America and in England with its enthusiastic singing of unpretentious Gospel songs—all establish on unquestionably scientific basis the spiritual value of sacred song.

*Cultural Value of Hymns.* Compare the number of people in any given city or community who read poetry in any of its forms with the number of church attendants who read, even when they do not sing, from three to eight hymns every Lord's Day. In literary influence, unconsciously absorbed, this wide use of hymns is vastly more effective upon the public at large than the more intensive and conscious influence of distinctly literary verse.

Millions of homes in Great Britain and America have copies of the Bible and of some hymnbook, while few of them have books of poetry. Phrases from hymns and psalms are a large part of the religious vocabulary of millions. They are quoted not only in sermons, but in essays and general writings and in the public press, perhaps more generally than are poems.

They have been appreciated by the greatest minds, who found them to be of great comfort and even delight, including such men as Benjamin Franklin (who first issued Watts' hymns in America), George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and William Ewart Gladstone. They deeply interested the man, Matthew Arnold, although the literary critic, Matthew Arnold, had no use for them.

*Spiritual Value of Hymns.* Hymns touch and influence the

most intimate life of men, the moral and spiritual, and are always influential for good. They concentrate the comforting truths of the Gospel, make them rememberable; what is even more important, they add the emotional vitality to those truths that make them real and actual.

To leave out the hymns from a single service might be an interesting experiment; but omit them permanently, as was the former custom among the Friends, and note how arid and flat the service becomes.

To some, the hymnbook is simply the Bible in another form, bringing its doctrines, its ideals, its hopes, its promises, its comforts, and its spiritual inspirations in a more apprehensible form. Having passed through the crucible of the actual personal experience of the writers of the hymns, they are more concrete, more appealing, more actual.

*The Value of Singing Hymns Too Often Overlooked.* Since the hymn has so high a spiritual value, it is all the more distressing that its possibilities of spiritual helpfulness are so generally overlooked and ignored by our ministers and their people. Even where it seems to be distinctly cultivated and emphasized, it is often the merely physiological effects that are sought. In other apparently earnest endeavors to develop its value, there is the aridity of merely artistic and literary emphasis, or the formal liturgical aspect that is stressed!

There is an absence of clear comprehension of what the hymns are intended to accomplish, of their meaning, of the emotions they are supposed to express, and of the methods to be used to vitalize them and to make them effective. They are used mechanically, in deference to tradition and good ecclesiastical form. Most ministers select hymns to fit the themes of their discourses, fitness depending solely on logical relations.

The spiritual life of the churches is not only the poorer and the shallower because of this loss of the quickening influence of the hymn, but this mechanical attitude is carried

## INTRODUCTION

over to the other exercises of the divine service. The preacher who sings mechanically will pray mechanically, preach mechanically.

*The Need of Emphasis on Efficient Use of Hymns.* The actual fact is that in the hymn the preacher has a most valuable factor in making his service spiritually effective. Even as a perfunctory exercise it has at least a social value; but if its emotional and spiritual possibilities are fully developed and exploited, it becomes one of the most impressive and thrilling means of securing genuinely religious results among his people. It is a tragedy that so many clergymen have such dull and unattractive services when through a proper use of hymns they might be made thrillingly interesting. Professor H. M. Poteat, of Wake Forest College, does not use too severe language in his *Practical Hymnology* when he says, "As a result of inexcusable ignorance, carelessness, and laziness, the singing of hymns, in all too many churches, instead of being an act of worship, has degenerated into a mere incident of the service, holding its place solely because of immemorial custom."

It is the purpose of this treatise at least to prevent the ignorance Professor Poteat complains of so bitterly. The other difficulties can be removed only "by fasting and prayer."



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THE SINGING CHURCH

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PART I  
THE CHARACTER OF THE HYMN





## ~~~~~ Chapter I ~~~~~

### WHAT IS A HYMN?

#### I. DEFINITION OF THE HYMN

*Importance of Accurate Definition.* Before undertaking the study of the hymn in its various aspects and relations, theoretical and practical, it should be very carefully defined. This is all the more necessary because the word "hymn" is used to cover so wide a sweep of religious poetry, and because our discussion is to be largely limited to its practical use in church work.

Dr. Austin Phelps' test of a genuine hymn, "Genuineness of religious emotion, refinement of poetic taste, and fitness to musical cadence—these are essential to a faultless hymn, as the three chief graces to a faultless character,"<sup>1</sup> is a very clear and charming statement of some essentials of a hymn, which needed emphasis in his rather prosaic day, but does not include all the requisites of a useful hymn.

*Inadequate Definition.* The narrow etymological definition of a hymn would confine it to sacred poems that, in at least some part of them, are directly addressed to some person of the Deity. St. Augustine limits the word "hymn" to "songs with praise to God—without praise they are not hymns. If they praise aught but God, they are not hymns." Even now there are hymnologists who insist upon this limited conception. No less a writer than W. Garrett Horder, in his fresh and illuminating *The Hymn Lover*, insists that "the cardinal test of a hymn should be that it is in some one, if not the

## THE SINGING CHURCH

whole of its parts, addressed to God." This shuts out the use of sacred poetry in instruction, inspiration, exhortation, and special practical applications of hymns. Moreover, if the hymn is to be limited to worship, then the unconverted can never sing sincerely in the public service, and the ancient and medieval churches were justified in withdrawing the privilege of religious song from the general laity.

*Definition Must Be Based on Practical Considerations.* The hymn is simply a means to the supreme end of all religious effort. That form of the hymn, that method of its use, and that musical assistance, which realize most fully the immediate and ultimate ends in view under given circumstances can be approved and used. This practical basis of actual spiritual results must govern in formulating the conception of the Christian hymn, as well as in forms of worship and prayer, in preaching, or in church organization.

Since our discussion of the hymn has in view its contributing efficiently to concrete spiritual results, its definition must have a practical basis. Etymological, scholastic, traditional, abstractly idealistic considerations can have only minor weight. *Types of Hymns.* The hymn may be viewed from too many angles to confine it to any one definition. Hence we must recognize different types of the hymn: (a) There is the poem regarding religious life and feeling that cannot be brought within the limitations of a musical setting, constituting the *Reading Hymn*; (b) we have the formless, but elevated, expression of worship or religious truth that at best can only be chanted, which we may call the *Canticle*, in which may be included such hymns as the *Te Deum*, the *Sanctus*, and unmetrical psalms; these, together with poems that are expressions of emotion, yet are not fitted for mass singing but may be effectively set to music of a different order, may be recognized as *Solo*, or *Choral*, Hymns, such of *The Stabat Mater*, *The Dies Irae*, and *Sunset and Evening Star*.

There is left us the sacred poem of such a form and type

that it may be called the *Congregational* or *Singing Hymn*, which is really the subject of the present practical discussion, and may be strictly defined as follows:

*Definition of the Congregational Hymn.* The Congregational Hymn is a poem expressing worship, praise, thanksgiving, and prayer on the Godward side; personal spiritual experience, emotion, and inspiration on the human side; and instruction on the religious side. It must be adapted to mass thinking and expression, in a form fitted to be sung by a Christian congregation, and calculated to express and stimulate or create religious feeling and purpose.

## II. THE HYMN MUST BE POETRY

*To Be Poetry, It Must Be Emotional.* The initiating force of all poetry must be emotion of some kind. That emotion may be mere earnestness, it may be satire, it may be satisfaction in contemplation of beautiful scenes, or satisfaction in ideas and memories, or displeasure at impressions painful or abhorrent. Few of us realize how unfailing is the flow of emotion in our minds responding to the world about us and in us.

To view life and the world through the eye of reason is valuable, of course; but if that vision lacks the support of the eye of emotion, it brings only a silhouette, without perspective, wanting a sense of reality. That is the weakness of abstract thinking, whether in theology or political economy.

If the hymn, therefore, is to perform its functions, it must be definitely emotional to a greater or less extent. This is particularly true of hymns of Christian experience or in the hymn's functioning in inspiration and exhortation. To confuse animal excitement with emotion is bad psychology. The genuine emotionality of a hymn is the best criterion of its practical value, for only through emotion can the will be reached.

*It Must Have Poetical Form.* The first requirement in this definition is that the hymn must be poetry. It should have

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meter and rhyme, else there can be no musical setting practicable for congregational use. The first task Calvin and his associates faced, after reaching the conclusion that only the inspired Psalms could be sung in the public religious assembly, was the preparation of a metrical version. True, the Psalms had been sung by the Greek and Roman Catholic churches, but only as chants by priestly choirs. In the English church service, these chants were frequently only led by the choir, the congregation joining in their singing. But this was practicable only in larger and long-established congregations, and even then there was more or less confusion. In general, this chanting was a failure, and the English church adopted the metrical versions. The use of the Psalms for responsive readings in our modern church services is a definitely practicable way of utilizing their liturgical and spiritual values.

The ostensible hymns of the Greek Church, of which Dr. Neale and Dr. Brownlie have furnished translations, or rather transformations, are not verse but prose. They were not sung by the congregations, or put into their hands, but were reserved for the reading of the clergy.

In like manner, the Latin hymns, although poetical in form—often complicated to an absurd degree—were not sung by the people, but were versified devotions inserted in the prose Psalms usually read by the priests.

In the Reformed churches for many centuries the word "hymn" referred to verses of "human composure," as opposed to metrified inspired Psalms.

The famous American hymnologist, Dr. Louis J. Benson, lays less stress on this metrical form: "A Christian hymn, therefore, is a form of words appropriate to be sung or chanted in public devotions." This opens the way for the inclusion of the "Te Deum Laudamus," the "Sanctus," and other canticles among our hymns. But as these historic texts are rarely or never sung by the people outside of the Church of England service, and used chiefly as texts for more or

less elaborate musical compositions sung by choirs, we may accept the common conception of the hymn as a metrical composition.

*It Must Be Poetic in Spirit.* While having the superficial music of the regularly recurring accents, and the liquid harmony of the vowels and consonants of the words as they flow through the lines, there must be also the deeper, more entrancing music of the literary grace of spiritual thought singing its beautiful expression. If poetry is "the expression of thought steeped in imagination and feeling," all the more must the hymn be expressive of religious thought transfigured by deep and sincere emotion.

While a hymn may be didactic, formulating doctrine, or enforcing obligation, it is not a really good and effective hymn unless the thought or exhortation is vitalized by imagination and emotion. Arid versification of Christian doctrines metaphysically conceived, or of ethical discussions with no heat of conviction, will stir no pulses of body, mind, or soul, but will conduce to the all too prevalent sense of the unreality of religious ideas and life.

*The Hymn Must Have Unity.* It must have unity of thought, emotion, and expression, all growing out of a definite vision of emotion, having a beginning, middle, and end, which mark the progress of the idea or feeling seeking formulation.<sup>2</sup>

*The Poetical Element Is Contributory Only.* Yet this element must be felt in the spirit of the hymn rather than in intention. Preciosity of phrase, elaborate metaphors and similes, obscure allusions, flights of fancy, are rarely in place. John Newton, the great hymn writer, speaks to this point in his usual forceful way: "Perspicuity, simplicity, and ease should be chiefly attended to; and the imagery and coloring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged in very sparingly and with great judgment." Sir Roundell Palmer is more detailed in his criticism: "Affectation or visible artifice is worse than excess of homeliness; a hymn is easily spoiled by a single falsetto note."<sup>3</sup>

The emphasis of the literary and poetical elements in hymns has produced some most valuable sacred lyrics, notably the hymns of Keble and Heber; but occasionally it has also led to such refinement, to such sought-out subtlety, and to such conscious preciousness that the virility and emotional contagion of what might have been an otherwise really effective hymn have been lost.

### III. THE CHRISTIAN HYMN MUST BE DISTINCTLY RELIGIOUS

*Poems of Semi-religious Fancy Are Not Hymns.* Poems of fancy with a few religious allusions cannot be classed as Christian hymns. The objection to the "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere"<sup>4</sup> has been rather heatedly urged, and there is no small justification for the criticism. The aboriginal idea of "the happy hunting grounds" might be referred to by its rather invertebrate fancy, instead of the heaven of the Christian faith. Eugene Field's "The Divine Lullaby" so vaguely suggests the divine care that it can hardly pass muster as a hymn. For use as a hymn, a poem must be explicitly Christian in thought and expression.

*Mere Moralizing Will Not Serve.* That a poem has a good moral does not authorize it to pose as a Christian hymn. "Brighten the Corner Where You Are" cannot be recognized as a Christian hymn, since it has no direct religious significance. There are recent ostensible sociological and humanitarian hymns that are open to the same criticism. It is not enough that the underlying assumptions are of Christian origin; they must be fundamentally religious, no matter what the application to practical living may be.

*Special Propaganda Is Not Admissible.* The value of hymns as a method of introducing and enforcing doctrines was recognized by the enemies of Christianity early in its history. The Arians in Asia Minor and in Northern Africa, and later throughout the Roman Empire, flooded the world

with songs sung to the popular melodies attacking the deity of Christ; and by their influence nearly wrecked Christianity. In our own day various "sports" from Christianity, and hybrids with other religions, are issuing collections of songs and garbled Christian hymns to serve their purposes. The Buddhists of Japan also are taking Christian songs bodily, with such changes as seem to them necessary. Unitarian hymnal editors have not hesitated to alter orthodox hymns to suit their own views.

That these emasculated hymns are no longer Christian hymns need not be argued at length. The difficulty is that they have lost the kernel of genuine Christian thought. The same is true of humanistic lyrics of propaganda in behalf of brotherhood or social welfare or economic justice, in which the religious motive is not urged. In general, a controversial poem cannot be recognized as a hymn; there is no religious help in controversy. Its emotions are combative, not devout. *Christian Hymns Should Be Genuinely Christocentric.* A Christian hymn should express some definite recognition of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Even if, as in metrical psalms, the name of Christ is not used, it should be implied, and unanimously accepted as implied. It may be worship, praise, prayer, confession, acceptance of salvation through Jesus Christ, spiritual experience, consecration, Christian doctrine, Christian hopes—or any other aspect or activity of the Christian faith. This is the very heart of the Christian hymn.

#### IV. SCRIPTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE HYMN

*Hymns Based on the Scriptures.* If the hymn is to be religious and Christian, it must be based on scriptural ideas, of course; we have no other authoritative source for our doctrines or experiences. All our other religious ideas and methods—our doctrines, our ethics, our religious ideals and impulses—find their roots there. We cannot afford to sing far-fetched inferences from unrelated scriptural passages when we have

such bodies of stupendous truth awaiting our contemplation, and when the hymnic expression of the emotions which those high and conspicuous doctrines call forth is so freely available. Scriptural truth, so plain that he who runs may sing, is the only raw material from which Christian hymns can be produced. It will provide for every religious need of the individual and of the Church.

*Use of Scriptural Forms Desirable.* There can be no question but that when scriptural phraseology is used spontaneously, it adds very much to the impressiveness of the hymn because of the devout associations it brings up in the minds of the singers. The hymn by so much acquires an authoritative-ness and elevation beyond ordinary verbiage.

But while the body of thought in a hymn must be distinctly religious, and therefore scriptural, it does not follow that the forms of expression must be scriptural as well. A distinguished writer on the subject here seems to be at fault: "Nothing should be called a hymn and nothing should be sung in our assemblies which is not virtually a paraphrase—and that a very faithful one—of Scripture passages, whether they are immediately connected in the Holy Word or not." Apply that rule to our hymnbooks and what would we have left?

Although biblical phrases do occur in many hymns, a very close adherence to this rule would stifle the poet's spontaneity and make his hymn stiff and mechanical, like most of the metrical psalms. Such a rule may seem very devout to the cursory reader, but really it is mischievous; it is sheer bibliolatry, an emphasis of the letter that killeth at the expense of the spirit that maketh alive.

## V. THE HYMN MUST BE FITTED FOR MASS SINGING

That the hymn is a distinctly social expression, participated in by the varied personalities massed in a congregation, introduces marked limitations that cannot be evaded.



*Congregational Singing Is a Pronounced Christian Exercise.*

It is a remarkable fact that only in Hebrew and Christian worship is a congregational use of hymns conspicuous. With all their literary and poetic urge for expression, the Greeks had no singing connected with their temple rites.<sup>5</sup> In so far as the Egyptians had musical elements in their temple ritual, it was choral and not congregational. In visiting pagan temples, one is struck by the utter absence of organized assembled worship; what worship occurs is individual only.

The Vedic hymns were not singing hymns, but reading hymns, for recital and meditation. According to Max Mueller, the only share the women had in the sacrifices was that the wife of the officiating priest, or head of the house, should recite the necessary hymns. Although in India there is singing connected with great festivals and processions, the songs used are so obscene that respectable Hindus are making an effort to have the public singing of them forbidden. They are usually sung by the female attendants of the idol, temple prostitutes, who are the professional singers of these ostensibly religious songs.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for this absence of true hymns is correctly indicated by W. Garrett Horder in his *The Hymn Lover*: "But so far as the material before us enables us to form an opinion, it is that hymns, as an essential of worship, have been mostly characteristic of the Christian and, in a less degree, of its progenitor, the Hebrew religion. Nor is this much to be wondered at, since it is the only religion calculated to draw out at once the two elements necessary to such a form of worship—awe and love—awe which lies at the heart of worship, and love which kindles it into adoring song."

*Meter Essential to Mass Singing.* The form of the verse is practically of commanding importance. The musical form of the hymn tune definitely fixes the form of the stanza. It must not be complicated or free in form, else the tune loses its needed simplicity and symmetry. More elaborate forms of

stanza may do for solo or choral numbers, where skilled composers write music that follows the vagaries of the form of the text; but the general congregation cannot be expected to sing tunes of elaborate and confusing structure. Although an occasional hymn of unusual form of stanza is fortunate in finding a happy musical mate, like "Lead, kindly Light" or "O Love, that wilt not let me go," the usual hymn must be adapted to one of about a dozen fundamental meters. Although the Gospel song is not so circumscribed in its form, because its setting goes with it, its forms are only rhythmical variations of the standard meters.

#### VI. PRACTICABILITY FOR ACTUAL USE

*Ideas Must Be Plainly Evident.* The thought of a good hymn must lie on the surface. It must appeal not only to the scholarly and subtle minds in a singing congregation, but also to all who are expected to join the religious exercise. Paul's word regarding unknown tongues applies here: "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?" The practical Paul enforces the parallel by saying a few verses further on, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." No matter how high the thought or how deep the sentiment of a poem may be, or how felicitously they may be expressed, it is not an effective hymn if study (for which there is no time at the moment of singing) is required to bring out its meaning and feeling.

*Hymns May Not Be Extremely Individualistic.* While a hymn may be the expression of the individual poet, it must be an appropriate expression of the mind and heart of the whole congregation as it sings. Yet in addition to the evident, clearly expressed thought, there may be singing, *sotto voce* between the lines, of deeper experiences and higher soarings of the spirit that only prolonged meditation can reveal.

Some sacred poems express a religious emotion in so indi-

### WHAT IS A HYMN?

vidual and unusual a way that they are not at all fitted to express the emotion of a congregation. As an illustration of a poem too personal and individualistic, here are a few stanzas of a hymn of Rev. Samuel J. Stone, which is found in an increasing number of current hymnals:

“My feet are worn and weary with the march  
On the rough road and up the steep hillside;  
O city of our God, I fain would see  
Thy pastures green where peaceful waters glide.

. . . . .

Patience, poor soul! The Saviour’s feet were worn,  
The Saviour’s heart and hands were weary too;  
His garments stained and travel-worn, and old,  
His vision blinded with pitying dew.”

This is a beautiful poem that would make an admirable text for a solo, but it is out of place on the lips of a congregation. Compare with this the very useful hymn by Bonar:

“I was a wand’ring sheep,  
I did not love the fold;  
I did not love my Shepherd’s voice,  
I would not be controlled.”

Every one of the first eight lines of this once widely used hymn begins with the pronoun of the first person singular, yet there is no particular individuality in this confession; it is the expression of the common experience in a straightforward manner, void of all idiosyncrasy.

In some hymns there is found an intensity of feeling that leads to an apparent extravagance of expression that a single soul can sometimes sincerely accept as the vehicle of its own experience, but which a gathering of miscellaneous people cannot sing without the great mass of them being insincere. For a careless person idly to sing with Faber,

“I love Thee so, I know not how  
My transports to control,”

or

“Ah, dearest Jesus, I have grown  
Childish with love of Thee,”

is sheer blasphemy. It is the sin of Uzziah!

The following verses from one of Charles Wesley's hymns combine the two faults of extravagance and too-intense individualism:

“On the wings of His love I was carried above  
All sin and temptation and pain;  
I could not believe that I ever should grieve,  
That I ever should suffer again.

I rode in the sky (freely justified I),  
Nor envied Elijah his seat;  
My soul mounted higher in a chariot of fire,  
And the moon it was under my feet.”

*Distracting Figures and Forms of Expression.* Other poems are so full of imagination, so crowded with unusual and almost bizarre figures of speech, that they fail to be the natural expression of the religious emotion of an assembly of religious people. George Herbert wrote a great many religious poems whose beauty and charm are only enhanced by their quaint and unusual imagery. Occasionally a hymnal editor ventures on a selection, but it is so foreign to the methods of thought and expression of the churches as not to appeal to their taste and feeling. Take the beautiful poem on the Sabbath day, “O day most calm, most bright.” The first line is spontaneous, expressive, and musical, and appropriate for a hymn. The second line, “The fruit of this, the next world's bud,” with its antithetical structure, is already somewhat formal and forced. But when the third and fourth lines,

“The indorsement of supreme delight,  
Writ by a Friend and with His blood,”

offer a purely legal and unpoetical figure, one's sense of song is entirely obscured.

Yet, when Herbert's imagery is most matter-of-fact and ungenial, there is a body of thought and there are a certain fitness and a clearness of relation that command admiration. *Verses Must Be Complete in Themselves.* Hymns that have long, intricate sentences extending through two or more verses are impracticable for use in a song service, as the break between the stanzas dislocates the development of the idea. Every verse must be practically complete in itself, no matter what its relation to the development of the general idea of the hymn may be.

*Musical Limitations.* It must also be recognized that there are limits to the expression congregational music can give. A poem that is vividly descriptive, or is in part intensely dramatic, cannot be recognized as a practicable hymn, since all stanzas have the same tune, a tune which cannot vary its musical effect to suit the differing stanzas.

Then there are hymns that are too majestic, too glowing, for a hymn-tune composer to write a fitting tune out of the limited resources of musical effects available to him. Such a hymn is that one of Henry Kirke White, of lamented memory:

“The Lord our God is clothed with might,  
The winds obey His will;  
He speaks, and in His heavenly height  
The rolling sun stands still.  
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His voice sublime is heard afar,  
In distant peals it dies;  
He yokes the whirlwind to His car  
And sweeps the howling skies.”

With a chorus of a thousand trained singers, an organ of extraordinary power, and an orchestra of five hundred instru-

ments, all concentrated on "St. Anne," one might make the music adequate to the words, but in an ordinary congregation the incongruity is painful. This must remain a reading hymn. *Outworn Hymns*. The efficient hymn must not distinctly belong to previous generations in its style and vocabulary or in its peculiar formulation of doctrine. Only as many of the older hymns have been purged of their obsolete and archaic words and turns of thought have they survived. For instance, we no longer sing, "Eye-strings break in death," as Toplady originally wrote it.

*Mistaken Objections to Some Hymns*. Some minds, although strong and keen, seem to have a very small visual angle. Some such persons condemn all hymns that are not direct praise. The line in Lyte's "Abide with Me"—"Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes"—has been objected to as Romish by some, blind to the fact that it is a prayer to Christ.

Others exclude hymns in which the pronoun of the first person singular occurs. Bishop Wordsworth, himself a hymn-writer of no mean merit (*vide* "O Day of rest and gladness" and "See, the Conqueror rides in triumph"), says, in his introduction to his *Holy Year*, that while the ancient hymns are distinguished by self-forgetfulness, the modern hymns are characterized by self-consciousness. As illustrative examples, he cites the following: "When I can read my title clear," "When I survey the wondrous cross," "My God, the spring of all my joys," and "Jesus, Lover of my soul." It is strange that so keen a mind should not have seen that his objection would apply to all liturgies!

The minister with his eye fixed upon his spiritual purpose can afford to ignore all these supersensitive critics who have refined refinement until sensibility becomes hyperesthesia, a veritable disease.

The use of hymns of a somewhat indifferent literary value is often thoughtlessly condemned because the importance of the recognition of its topic is overlooked. Such a topic as

"Church Erection," or "Education," may not occasion the deep feeling necessary to the writing of a great hymn, and yet it must find a place in the practical work of the church. Here again Dr. Phelps gives a useful warning: "The severity of aesthetic taste must not be permitted to contract the range of devotional expression in song. . . . Our desire to restrict the number of hymns upon occasions, and other hymns of infrequent use, ought not to banish such hymns entirely. . . . A hymn intrinsically inferior, therefore, may be so valuable relatively, as justly to displace a hymn which is intrinsically its superior."

Aside from the topical symmetry referred to, this principle will find other applications in the practical use of hymns. Some inferior hymns have for some occasions a greater immediate effect than much better ones, perhaps because of a more singable tune or because its sentiment fits into the situation or because it makes a desired impression in a more efficient way.

## ~~~~~Chapter II~~~~~

### THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF HYMNS

#### I. THE IMPULSE TO WRITE HYMNS

THE writing of the best hymns of the Christian Church was not a matter of ulterior purpose, any more than is the singing of the hermit thrush in the wilderness. They are the result of the urge for expression that lies back of all the best architecture, literature, and art of the human race. There is the vision, the sense of reality, the subjective response to truth, to beauty, and to exalted experiences that must find an objective bodying-forth in some appropriate form.

The great doctrines of Christianity loom up in their dignity and majestic sweep, in their adequacy to the highest and deepest needs of the human soul. The spontaneous hymn is but a cry of astonished delight, of exalted inspiration, of self-forgetful contemplation of the revealed glory, an instinctive appeal to other souls to share the rapture of the vision. Such a hymn is not calmly planned; it forces itself upon the mind of the rapt poet.

#### II. PURPOSE IN WRITING HYMNS

*The Influence of Purpose.* This instinct for sharing with others, for winning their attention and participation in a blessed experience, may produce a measure of premeditation and become a more or less clearly defined purpose. The idea of the needs of other souls, or of the Church at large, may be-



come an additional factor, bringing in the recognition of the importance of adaptation to the mental processes of those to be helped, or of practical methods of reaching them.

Also the originating impulse may grow, as in the case of Isaac Watts, out of the call of some perceived need among the writer's fellows, or of some lack in the work of the Church. The emotional and poetic elements may be marshaled by bringing up the memory of some past exalted vision of the truth, or of some former quickening spiritual experience, or (better yet!) by an abiding realization of the truth of some doctrine, or by a perennial flow of devout feeling.

Dr. Martineau insisted that "every spontaneous utterance of a deep devotion is poetry in its essence, and has only to fall into lyrical form to be a hymn." But he went further and declared that "no expression of thought or feeling that has an ulterior purpose (i.e., instruction, exposition, persuasion, or impression) can have the spirit of poetry." His idealism failed to realize that the spirit of poetry in a writer may be associated with a purpose of helpfulness urging expression in an efficient form. To delete all the hymns in our church collections that have definite spiritual purposes would rob the Christian Church of most of its devoutest and most helpful hymns.

*The Purpose Must Affect Only the Practical Aspects.* Both the literary and devotional value of a hymn of purpose will depend upon the writer's ability to reproduce the mental conditions of a purely spontaneous hymn. If the purpose can be confined to the practical aspects of the hymn, while the spiritual and poetic impulses control the thought and spirit, then the most valuable and effective hymn may be produced.

But if the ulterior purpose fully occupies the mind of the writer, the hymn will be mechanical and uninspiring. In the more prolific hymn writers, like Watts and Charles Wesley, the relative influence of vision and purpose is easily detected. In their best hymns, the purpose is still present, but latent, and its guidance unconscious.

### III. PURPOSE OF THE USER OF HYMNS

When we speak of the purpose of the hymn, therefore, it is not so much the mental attitude of the writer that is to be considered as that of the user of the hymn. He finds a body of religious verse ready to his hand, some of which is adapted to secure spiritual ends, or fitted to the social conditions which he seeks to improve. His purpose controls not the production of available verse, but the selection from existing stores of religious lyrics.

The choice of hymns by the user will be determined by the characteristics and limitations which his practical purposes demand. There are three inevitable factors: the end to be realized, the people to be influenced, and the hymns adapted to affect both.

### IV. PURPOSES SERVED BY SINGING HYMNS

*Hymns Unite Christians in Worship and Christian Activities.* The singing of hymns is the most practicable method of uniting assembled Christians in worship and praise and of creating a common interest in the various church activities. This is really the leading purpose of such a gathering.<sup>1</sup>

Worship in prayer, when it is spontaneous, must be largely individual; when it is expressed in responsive ritual, there is great danger of mechanical stiffness in the outward form of the prayers and in their reading, and also in the limited area of the thought to be expressed. But song is the natural and spontaneous vehicle for exalted feeling and gives the greatest opportunity for varied sentiment. No one individual could hope to strike all the strings of noble praise as have a thousand saints who have written our hymns.

*Hymns Concentrate Interest and Attention.* There is a concentration of interest and attention. The common thought, the common emotion, the common impulse of devotion, the common expression, the unanimous attitude of will and pur-

pose—all quicken the susceptibilities and enlarge the spiritual horizon. God seems nearer, more actual, and more realizable as the source of every blessing. Abstract ideas of God as Father, of his Son Jesus Christ as Saviour, of the Holy Spirit as Comforter, quicken into blessed realities. It is easy to appropriate the joy, the reverence, the adoration, the intimate communion with God, which the hymns so clearly, so movingly, so contagiously, even so rapturously express, and to make them intimately our own. This is true worship, the high peak in man's experience of God.

The social elements in human nature come into play and intensify the religious emotions. The personal distractions and inhibitions that hamper devotion are eliminated. Under properly effective conditions there is a mass attitude, a mass emotion, that needs only a mass expression to affect every individual unit. The contagion of the crowd in expression and in action will affect the most sluggish and indifferent and carry them into an experience that they could not have reached alone. Add to this the stimulation of the music and the physical exhilaration of singing, and the worship is lifted to a pitch of enthusiasm not otherwise possible.

This worshipful use of hymns exercises a most inspiring and vitalizing influence on the participants. The reaction of the mind and soul of the singers to the exalted sentiments sung must have a profoundly spiritualizing effect upon their natures. One cannot sing the old Latin hymn, "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," in any genuine way without feeling an accession of greater love to Christ; or "My faith looks up to Thee," by Ray Palmer, without a deeper realization of one's dependence on Jesus Christ for salvation and for keeping grace.<sup>2</sup>

*Hymns Afford a Means of Expression for the Congregation.* Another office of the church hymn is to give a voice to those deep experiences in spiritual things that enrich the lives of the children of God. Many excellent Christians are dumb, un-

able to give expression to their genuine spiritual experiences. Others find their means of voicing what they feel totally inadequate. The hymns they sing and appropriate to themselves unstop their silent tongue. High tides of spiritual blessings, times of refreshing when Christ is near to the soul, hours of privilege when the whispering of the Holy Spirit is heard, victories over fierce or subtle temptation when God's grace proves sufficient, moments of God's overshadowing presence when the whole world is transfigured, and a thousand other marvelous experiences in the Christian life—all call for hymns to express them. They must be tender hymns, ecstatic hymns, triumphant hymns that will satisfy the craving of the soul to voice forth its deepest love, its spiritual ecstasies, its strange sense of overcoming power. The dumb soul, unable to speak of its explorations of divine grace, finds a voice in these hymns written by saints who had the divine gift of expressing like glimpses of the divine glory.<sup>3</sup>

*Hymns Provide Help and Comfort in Dark Hours.* These hymns not only bring the joy of giving articulate expression to these mountain-top experiences, thus reviving them again and again, but they validate these experiences by showing that others have shared them and give them reality in the hours when faith fails and the temptation arises to consider them mere mirages and illusions. Others have been with us in Bunyan's Beulah Land and verify our experiences of its delights.

*Hymns Afford Clear Expressions of Christian Truth.* Another purpose in the use of hymns is to secure the clearest, most impressive, most appealing, most rememberable statement of the leading truths of the Christian faith that will fix them most ineradicably in the consciousness and the life of the individual and of the church. Such hymns must not be dry formulations of abstract doctrines, desiccated by logical discussions and metaphysical hair-splittings. Truth that is dry is no longer vital truth. Its vitamins of reality, of the deep

## THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF HYMNS

feelings called forth by a sense of its actuality, of spiritual and poetic intuition, of self-propagating vitality, have been lost. Aridity of orthodoxy begets aridity of heterodoxy and is usually responsible for it.

Didactic hymns that will serve the purposes of the Church must be living hymns, expressing truth transfigured by the feelings aroused by the contemplation of its glorious reality. "There is little heresy in hymns." Heresies for the most part arise from arid mechanical reasonings; hymns flow from the intuitions of the heart.<sup>4</sup> This explains why some of our best hymns about Christ were written by Unitarians.

*Hymns Give Opportunity for Active Participation by All.* Another purpose of the singing of hymns is to secure the active participation of the whole congregation in the service. Although the responsive reading is valuable in this respect, the union of all the voices of the people in song is more striking, calls for more aggressive effort, and definitely wins the attention of all to the sentiments expressed in the hymn. It creates more interest and stimulates both body and mind.

*Hymns Provide Variety.* The singing of hymns also adds marked variety to the order of service and so renders it more attractive. It supplies climaxes in different parts of the program and relaxations of attention to the spoken word. It represents a greater contrast with the other exercises because it calls for active participation and produces entirely different effects. The lack of song in the services of the Friends has been one of the greatest factors in the limited growth of a movement representing deep earnestness, conscientiousness, and spirituality.

This variety and the opportunity to take a modest part in the service have proved among the greatest attractions. The more singing, the more people, is the universal experience.

*Hymns Create a Religious Atmosphere.* The use of hymns creates an atmosphere of religious interest and feeling that is realized not only by the believers in the congregation, but by

the unregenerate as well. They may not enter fully into the spirit of the exercises, but an intellectual interest is awakened by the singing that may rise into spiritual interest and into an approach to the spiritual life. Rev. George F. Pentecost, famous in his day as a preacher and as a very successful evangelist, recognized the aggressive and practical value of hymn-singing: "I am profoundly sure that among the divinely ordained instrumentalities for the conversion and sanctification of the soul, God has not given a greater, besides the preaching of the Gospel, than the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. I have known a hymn to do God's work in a soul when every other instrumentality has failed—I have seen vast audiences melted and swayed by a simple hymn when they have been unmoved by a powerful presentation of the Gospel from the pulpit."

*Hymns in the Home.* No small practical value in Christian hymns is found in their use in family life where young and old sing them together and so sanctify and spiritualize the household atmosphere. The storing of the memories of the children with the leading hymns of the church is no small factor in their Christian nurture. The older members of the family also will be stimulated spiritually, finding in the memorized hymns strength and solace while they bear the heat and burden of the day. We have lost the spiritual atmosphere in many of our Christian homes, not only by the neglect of the family altar, but also by the neglect of the singing and memorizing of the hymns and tunes of the church.

One of the chief influences in the preparation of Ira D. Sankey for his great life-work was the singing of hymns as the family gathered around the great log-fire in the homestead. He not only familiarized himself with the old hymns and tunes and popular sacred songs, but he was impressed by their spirit and by their adaptation to the needs of the human soul.

*Hymns in Personal Work.* The use of hymns in personal

work, in the visitation of the sick, in improvised religious gatherings in private homes, has been largely abandoned, much to the loss of the churches. When D. L. Moody was trying out Ira D. Sankey during the latter's pregnant first visit to Chicago, his singing to the sick and to the spiritually needy ones they called upon was a notable item in the practical test.

Prof. Waldo S. Pratt, of the Hartford Theological Seminary, whose most valuable book has been quoted in these pages again and again, sums up the results of an intelligent and devout use of hymns most admirably: "Hymn-singing may surely be called successful when it affords an avenue for true approach to God in earnest and noble worship; when it exerts a wholesome and uplifting reflex influence on those who engage in it, establishing them in the truth and quickening their spirituality; and when it creates a diffused atmosphere of high religious sympathy and vigorous consecration, so that even unbelievers are affected and constrained by it." <sup>5</sup>

But if these purposes of the singing of hymns are to be realized and their values exploited, they must be properly employed. They must be made vital and their messages brought home to the hearts of the people. There should be no listless, merely formal singing of noble Christian hymns. There is unwitting sacrilege in doing that. The truth of God, the high experiences of his saints, are rendered unreal and lose their appeal—they become stale.

There are multiplied millions of true believers who duplicate the unhappy experience of a prominent London preacher who declared that he did not exactly disbelieve the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, but that they had become unreal to him. They were only abstractions, playthings of his logical faculties, husks from which the living kernel had fallen, which left his soul hungry. How could a minister by the discussion of what seemed to him unrealities inspire and spiritualize his hearers? How can any minister to whom the hymns in his

hymnal are dry and abstract rhymes about vague and uninteresting platitudes at best, be able to make his song service a vital contribution to the spiritual progress of his people? If the hymns stir him, he can easily make them stir the people.

#### V. REASONS FOR THE MINISTER'S APPRECIATION OF HYMNS

*Hymns Are Evidences of the Effect of the Bible.* The hymn-book is an evidence of what the Bible can do with unregenerate human nature. That the truth of the Bible should be able to take Newton, the slave driver, and make of him a minister of God, not only himself writing such hymns as "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound," "Glorious things of Thee are spoken," or "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," but inspiring and encouraging the poor hypochondriac, William Cowper, so that from his heart should well forth the hymns, "There is a fountain filled with blood," "God moves in a mysterious way," and "Sometimes a light surprises," is in itself one of the great evidences of Christianity.

*Hymns and Psalms Affected the Life of the Church.* The extraordinary result of the use of hymns and psalms in the life of the church and of believers is another reason for the minister's valuing hymns highly. The awkward lines of Sternhold and Hopkins' version of the psalms entered into the speech and private devotion of Scotch and English Christians as even the Bible itself did not, becoming a very liturgy to the condemners and flouters of liturgies. Thomas Jackson in his life of Charles Wesley remarks that "it is doubtful whether any human agency has contributed more directly to form the character of the Methodist societies than the hymns. The sermons of the preachers, the prayers of the people, both in their families and social meetings, are all tinged with the sentiments and phraseology of the hymns."

*Hymns in Personal Christian Experience.* Listen to the personal experiences of Christians in our own day and you will



hear more reference to hymns than to the Scriptures. There is now no such committing to memory of passages of the Bible and of hymns as there was in preceding generations, but almost without set purpose, by simple absorption, the average Christian can quote more lines of hymns than he can of Scripture verses. This extraordinary place in the affections and life of Christian people is no derogation to the Bible, for the hymns are simply the Bible in another form.

*Hymns as Stimulating the Spiritual Life of the Minister.* To some men who lack emotional and poetic insight, the hymnbook may appear dry and uninteresting. It certainly is uninteresting to the unspiritual man, no matter how poetical he may be, and this will account for the occasional attack upon the hymns of the Christian Church as being without poetical power or merit. But the Christian minister, who deals with spiritual things, for whom the emotions of the human heart give a great opportunity for sowing the seed of life, ought to find the study of his hymnbook a great delight.

*Hymns Approved by Paul.* If there were no other reason why a minister should be profoundly interested in hymns and their use in religious work, the example and exhortations of Paul should be sufficient. He does not lay as much stress upon preaching, nor upon praying, as he does on singing. He admonishes the Ephesians that they "be filled with the Spirit"; and that divine possession should manifest itself in "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." A part of this exercise of singing was to consist of "giving thanks unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>

He exhorts the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," and one of the results of such indwelling was to be "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"; he even urges earnestness and sincerity in such singing, "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."<sup>7</sup> Such singing should not be

with mere enthusiasm, for he assures the Corinthians that his singing was not only devout but intelligent as well: "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."<sup>8</sup> There is more than a suspicion that in some of his most striking passages he is quoting a current hymn or interjecting a part of an improvised hymn.

*Hymns in the Early Church.* The emphasis placed on the value of song by the early church is made clear by Tertullian, who states that at the current "love feasts" each person in attendance was invited at the close of the feast to sing either from the Holy Scriptures or from the dictates of his own spirit a song of adoration to God.

In the middle of the third century St. Basil testifies to the value of congregational singing as practiced in his day: "If the ocean is beautiful and worthy of praise to God, how much more beautiful is the conduct of the Christian assembly where the voices of men and women and children, blended and sonorous like the waves that break upon the beach, rise amidst our prayers to the very presence of God." The remark is made by one of the ancient fathers that the singing of the churches often attracted "Gentiles"—i.e., unconverted persons—to their services, who were baptized before their departure.

*Hymns Prepared the Church for Periods of Marked Progress.* While by no means the only cause for such progress, a great increase in the writing and singing of hymns has been a conspicuous feature in every great religious movement. The converse is also true that when the privilege of congregational singing was curtailed or withdrawn, spiritual declension followed.

The victory of the Church over Arianism was a singing victory both in the Eastern and Western churches. The Crusades were marked by processional singing of religious songs. The singing Lollards and Hussites heralded the Great Reformation, and the most effective preaching of Huss and Luther and Calvin was the hymns and metrical psalms they intro-

duced. Watts prepared the way for the Wesleyan revival, and the Wesley brothers entered the path he had blazed and made a great highway of Christian song. Dour New England found its voice during the Great Revival under Jonathan Edwards and later under Nettleton. The preachers who saved the pioneers of the Appalachian range of mountains and the budding Middle West from relapsing into paganism and savagery were "singing parsons" with their repertoire of "spiritual" revival choruses and religious ballads.

Even Charles G. Finney, the great praying evangelist and later founder of Oberlin College, whose revivals swept through New York and northern Ohio like a prairie fire, had the popular *Christian Lyre*, edited by Joshua Leavitt, as a breeze to fan the flame, although he often forbade the singing of hymns in certain conditions in his meetings. William B. Bradbury, S. J. Vail, Robert Lowry, William H. Doane, Fanny Crosby, George F. Root, Philip Phillips, P. P. Bliss, and many others had written and taught the American people the songs that prepared the way for the Moody and Sankey revival movement which so profoundly affected the religious life of both America and England and, through the missionaries, intensified the faith of the Christian Church throughout the world.

Through all the centuries it has been the singing armies that have won the religious wars. The successful denominations and individual churches have been pre-eminently singing churches led by singing preachers who swayed their communities. Cardinal Newman is now chiefly remembered for his hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light." Washington Gladden, a great religious leader, will have his memory kept green by his hymn, "O Master, let me walk with Thee," and Bishop Phillips Brooks fifty years hence will be chiefly remembered for his Christmas carol, "O little town of Bethlehem."

## VI. STRANGE INDIFFERENCE TO HYMNS

*The Minister's Indifference.* In view of the considerations

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and facts here marshaled, how strange is the general lack of interest among ministers toward their hymn service, toward the hymns themselves, their history, their meaning, the methods to be used in exploiting their great value. Is it saying too much to suggest that three out of five ministers have no adequate conception of the possibilities of hymn singing or appreciation of its value?

*Indifference of the Congregation.* Outside of the lamentable weakness of egocentric human nature it is difficult to discover why the part of the divine service devoted to sacred song should be so utterly subordinated to the other parts of the sacred program; but that it is true is so evident to any reasonable observer that it needs little or no proof. The janitor religiously postpones opening or shutting windows, or shaking down the furnace, during the prayer, or sermon even, until the hymn is being sung. Members of the congregation seize the opportunity to leave the room, or to consult with others about church affairs in all too audible voices.

The hymn ought to be the consummate note of prayer and praise and devout meditation on sacred themes, the great co-operative climax in the worship of God. It is too often looked upon as a merely physical stimulus to liven up the tedious service.<sup>9</sup>

This ought not so to be! For the primary object of assembling the saints is united worship—united praise. There can be no true public prayer without an element of worship; but it has a recognition of personal needs and even wants. This human factor makes it a composite of the human and the divine and lowers its dignity. In genuine praise there is a forgetfulness of the human element and a rising into the pure realm of the divine. In true praise the human soul is unconscious of self and utterly absorbed in God.

Hence it is not too much to say that congregational song is the supreme element in all worship.

## ~~~~~Chapter III~~~~~

### THE LITERARY ASPECT OF HYMNS

#### I. WHAT MAKES THE HYMN LITERATURE?

*Its Character as a Transcript of Life.* In so far as a hymn is a transcript of a genuine conviction, intensified by emotion, or of a profound experience, it is literature. There have gone into it vision, feeling, imagination, sincerity, intimate experience—an appropriation of the influences life offers a soul that gazes upon it with wide-open eyes. It is not the measure or the rhyme that makes literature of a hymn. A bald formulation in metrical form of doctrines dissected by metaphysical processes may be called a hymn by courtesy, but it is not literature any more than would be a textbook on mathematics.

But a hymn in which the hurried pulse and the throbbing heartbeat of deep human feeling can be felt is genuine literature, a revelation of human personality and of the collective life of which it is representative. It is the story of the experience of an exploring soul seeking knowledge of the deeper spiritual relations with God and his Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

*Its Wide Distribution.* The importance of the hymn as literature is further attested by the response to it of the many generations which have made it the vehicle of their religious life. Dr. Reeves calls attention to the wide distribution of hymn-books; they have come from the printing press by the multiplied millions during the last four hundred years. Three millions of the *Methodist Hymnal* have been broadcast over

the United States, sixty million *Hymns Ancient and Modern* over the British Empire. Hundreds of other contemporary hymnals, both official and unofficial, aggregate even more millions. If we add collections of Gospel Songs, we get many millions more. No other form of literature has had so wide a distribution. A single hymnal has had more active readers than all the poetry in the world, ancient and modern.<sup>2</sup> To dispose of an edition of one hundred thousand volumes of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, the standard collection of the poems of the ages approved by critics, would take a score of years. Moreover, they would go largely into libraries, private and public, for occasional reference.

*Its Acceptance Through Many Generations.* But wideness of distribution is no final criterion of literary quality, else our newspapers might lay an earnest claim to literary standing. But these hymnals do not severally represent individual writers, as do most of the books of poetry; they contain a common body of hymns representing the major portion of all of them. That selection of hymns, fundamental to all of them, has been culled out from the great mass of sacred lyrics written through many centuries, by the consensus of different generations, of different backgrounds, of different grades of social and literary culture, of different peoples and even races, and accepted as the most complete expression of the fundamental Christian life of them all. If that unanimity of responsiveness and practical endorsement by continued use does not confer the accolade of literature upon that body of hymns, the accepted definition of literature is faulty and inadequate.

*Its Profound Influence.* No other verses have been read so often. They have not only shaped the religious thought and experience of vast peoples and developed their character, but have affected their general modes of thought and forms of expression and influenced their secular literature. Without their rugged, ax-hewn version of the Psalms, would the Scotch have become the stern, dour, conscience-driven people

the world has learned to know and value? Without the vigorous "spirituals" and the lively rhythms of its gospel songs, would the American church life have developed the freedom from ecclesiastical tradition and formalism, and the fearless aggressiveness that has lighted the beacons of salvation in every land? The hymn has been the expression of life, and in turn has become the wellspring of life.

Whatever of culture and refinement other forms of literature have brought has directly touched only a small minority, and but indirectly the great mass of civilized peoples; but the hymn has had a direct influence on the life and character of the mass of the people, and has appealed to their instincts and imaginations and shaped their ideals in the most immediate and striking way. Where one person has been refined and enriched in mind by the poetry of Milton, or Wordsworth, or Tennyson, a thousand have been comforted, inspired, and transformed by Sternhold and Hopkins, Watts, or Wesley.

Archbishop Trench, the fault of whose hymns was chiefly that they were too few, was admonished by his friend, John Sterling, to give more attention to hymn-writing: "You would influence millions whom poetry in any other form would never reach."

## II. OBJECTIONS TO RECOGNIZING ITS LITERARY CHARACTER

*Due to Narrow Definition of Literature.* In spite of these facts that surely entitle the hymn to be considered literature in the most vital sense of the word, there are critics who look upon it with undisguised indifference, if not with scorn. Partly due to an utter lack of sympathy with the use of it, partly to an academic idea of what literature really is, emphasizing form and rhetorical interest, partly because its appeal is emotional and not mainly intellectual, these objectors are blind to the larger interests involved. If there is any truth in the insistence of some literary critics that there are few hymns that are

good from a literary point of view, Montgomery's statement may give a sufficient reason: "Our good poets have seldom been Christians and our good Christians have seldom been good poets."<sup>3</sup>

*Due to Failure to Realize Limitations of Hymns.* A better reason is that such critics have seldom realized the limitations the singing hymn presents to the poet. Milton was a great poet, but he could not condense his ideas sufficiently or give them the needed terse expression. He needed a large canvas, while the successful hymn-writer is confined to a miniature. Even Tennyson, who succeeded in small lyrics, wrote only one hymn and that ill-adapted to actual congregational use.

Palgrave, in the preface to his *Treasury of Sacred Songs*, compares secular and sacred verse as follows: "Secular verse covers many provinces: manners, incident, love, landscape, the vast sphere of drama—in a word, all the many-colored romance of life. Sacred verse can hardly go beyond one province: to expect masterpieces in one field approximately numerous as those in the secular lyric is unreasonable. Even more unreasonable is it, when of this single province a district only is chosen for censure, and treated as the whole domain. Hymns, well-nigh limited to the functions of prayer and praise, are precisely that region in which a practical aim is naturally, almost inevitably, predominant!"

*Some Critics and Their Criticism.* Dr. Samuel Johnson's criticism of hymns may be brushed aside as based on a wrong conception of poetry, which to his mind called not for simplicity, but for something near to that artificiality which he conceived of as art: "Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical." . . . "The paucity of its topics enforces perpetual repetition, and the sanctity of its matter rejects the ornament of figurative diction."

In mitigation of the false judgment of the old literary



dictator, it may be said that the golden age of English hymnody had not yet arrived.

The later criticism of the hymn by Matthew Arnold represents more fully the attitude of the literary critic in our own day. The practical aspects of life were not ignored by him, but they did not bulk large in his mind. Hence it is not surprising that, while he fully comprehended the wide influence of the hymn, he had little or no sympathy with its spirit and even less with its purpose, so that he could write about it after this fashion: "Hymns, such as I know them, are a sort of composition which I do not at all admire. . . . I regret their prevalence and popularity among us." Could anti-religious rationalism go further?

Among more recent critics, Edmund Clarence Stedman speaks of the hymn as "the kind of verse which is, of all, the most common and indispensable." But Professor Boynton in the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, gives as much space to "Yankee Doodle" as he does to American Hymnody and refers to its "sentimental ornateness," "tawdry sentimentalism," and "banalities of evangelistic song," unconsciously drawing an unhappy portrait of his own spiritual condition.<sup>4</sup>

The older criticism of the hymn had at least the merit of thoughtfulness and serious consideration of its value and of its shortcomings.

The hymns that would have satisfied literary critics would have required a spiritual delicacy and refinement, an elegance and artistry of phrase, a vagueness of religious idea devoid of genuine feeling, that would shut them out from use in the workaday world in which we live. To set aside the "good and useful purpose" acknowledged by Matthew Arnold in the consideration of the hymn is to ignore its whole reason for being, and, what is vastly more important, to ignore the deepest needs of the human soul.

## III. THE WRITING OF HYMNS

*The Handicap of Thought and Diction.* Alfred Tennyson clearly recognized the limitations that handicap the writer of hymns. "A good hymn is the most difficult thing in the world to write!" The hymn he did write, "Sunset and Evening Star," beautiful as it is, failed in practicability for congregational use. Its unfitness for mass singing in its various phases is the chief stumblingblock.

The hymn writer finds in the limitations, which he must bear in mind as he writes, no small hindrance to spontaneity and poetic vision. He must limit the thought not only to the comprehension, but to the natural feelings of the people who are to sing what he writes. He must not use unusual or polysyllabic words. Striking figures, startling tropes, involved similes, obscure metaphors, allusions to things known by but few, descriptive or dramatic lines, are all forbidden. Every verse, whether in single or double meter, must be complete in itself, whatever its relation in thought to what precedes or follows. There must be unity, simplicity, condensation of thought, and yet a clearness that shuts out involved thought or mysticism that cannot be instantly grasped. The hymn writer is like a violinist called upon to play on a single string.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Hornblower Gill, an English hymn writer who is slowly gaining recognition in current hymnals—*The Revised Presbyterian Hymnal* has five of his hymns—gives his conception of what hymns should be, in his preface to his first volume, issued in 1868. He insists that the true hymn is a true poem in every case, while it is debarred from liberties of luxuriance which may be claimed by other poetry. "It may easily be too figurative; it cannot be too glowing or imaginative. . . . They should exhibit all the qualities of a good song—liveliness and intensity of feeling, directness, clearness and vividness of utterance, strength, sweetness, and sim-

plicity and melody of rhythm: excessive subtlety and excessive ornament should be alike avoided."

*The Handicap of Meter.* Not the slightest handicap is the necessity of choosing a form of stanza that will at the same time fit the writer's sentiment and be adapted to singable tunes known to the congregations which are to be lyrically served. This range of form is quite limited. Most of these tunes call for iambic or trochaic measure, because anapaestic or dactylic numbers lack the dignity and the impressiveness necessary for general hymns.

The form of the stanza may take the elevated, heavy "Long" Meter, the more widely expressive "Common" Meter, the sententious "Short" Meter, "Sevens and Sixes," "Eights and Sevens," plain "Sevens" or "Sixes," or the more lively "Sixes and Fours" or "Sixes and Fives."<sup>6</sup>

These different meters have very marked characteristics. It is really marvelous how the instinct of true hymn writers in all generations has unconsciously, or at most subconsciously, taken account of them and with practical unanimity observed them.

The Long Meter is stately and dignified. It is the fit expression of noble praise like the Long Meter Doxology, "Lord of all being, throned afar," "From all that dwell below the skies," "Before Jehovah's awful throne," or elevated sentiment like "God is the refuge of His saints," "When I survey the wondrous cross," and "'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow." Its long, even lines, broken by no strong stops, afford a smooth, graceful expression for general truths and Christian doctrine in poetic form, such as "O Jesus, our chief cornerstone," "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," and "O Love! how deep, how broad, how high!"

The Common Meter is much more varied in its possibilities of expression, as its unequal lines and alternate rhymes give greater freedom. It is the prevailing meter of the old English ballad. It is really the most adaptable and pliable

form of stanza open to the hymn writer, giving equal opportunity of expression to all emotions and classes of truth. It is a fit vehicle alike for the elevated praise of "All hail the power of Jesus' name," the majesty of "I sing th' almighty pow'r of God," the doctrinal statement of "There is a fountain filled with blood," the tenderness of "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," the vigor of "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve," and the quiet resignation of "Father, whate'er of earthly bliss." On account of this adaptability it has become the Common Meter in fact as well as in name. Its exclusive use in some of the collections of metrical psalms shut out the use of tunes in other meters and so led to the singing of only a few of the more popular Common Meter tunes; the result was that the congregational singing in the churches in England, Scotland, and America was nearly wrecked.

S. M. might stand for sententious meter as well as for Short Meter, as the two short lines and the long pauses at the end of each of them give it an emphatic, terse, even epigrammatic style. This may be seen in "My soul, be on thy guard," "Welcome, sweet day of rest," "Stand up and bless the Lord," "Crown Him with many crowns," and "Come, Holy Spirit, come." John Fawcett was not happy in the selection of this meter for his otherwise very useful and precious hymn, "Blest be the tie that binds," as the strong pause at the end of the first line in all but one of his stanzas cuts his sentences in two and makes the hymn alike difficult to read and sing. The same difficulty will be found in the reading of other hymns in this meter, the limitations of which have not always been recognized by writers using it. It would be a very slow, heavy meter did not the longer third line give it needed movement.

The meter known as 6s lacks the longer third line and is therefore peculiarly grave and disjointed. It is well adapted for hymns of passive faith or resignation, such as "My Jesus, as Thou wilt," "Thy way, not mine, O Lord," or for dolorous

prayers like "My spirit longs for Thee," and "I hunger and I thirst."

The meter 6s and 4s in its various forms might be supposed to be even slower than the 6s because of the additional short lines of four syllables each. The opposite is true. In some cases the first four lines are rhythmically equivalent to two lines of ten syllables each, so slight is the pause of actual thought at the end of the six-syllable line, with the result that the slowness is quickened into simple dignity and elevation. But even where the pauses at the end of the first and third lines are long, the shorter second and fourth lines, as in common meter, give added movement. In the other form of 6s and 4s, the first two six-syllable lines are so knit together by their common rhyme and, if properly written, have so markedly a common goal of completeness of thought in the third line toward which they hurry that again the movement is hastened and the severity of the 6s is mitigated. The same principle applies to the following three or four lines, depending on the form examined. Hence we have in the various forms of this meter some of our noblest hymns of prayer, praise, and victory, such as "Nearer, my God, to Thee," "More love to Thee, O Christ," "We are but strangers here," "Fade, fade, each earthly joy," "My faith looks up to Thee," "Rise, glorious Conqueror, rise," "Come, Thou Almighty King," and "My country, 'tis of thee."

#### IV. THE LITERARY QUALITY NOT TO BE OVERESTIMATED

*Literary Quality Not the Supreme Consideration.* Although poetical feeling and imagination and nice literary craftsmanship are not to be undervalued, but rather to be earnestly sought for in our hymns, after all, they are not the supreme considerations. Practical use has proved many hymns that conspicuously lacked them to have been supremely useful because of their spiritual content, sincerely and lucidly expressed,

When hymn writers like Watts and Newton have deliberately ignored and even avoided literary values, and yet have written among the most useful hymns in our collections, the critic who insists on poetical quality has by no means a *prima facie* case. Charles Wesley was a poet, but in his valuable hymn "A charge to keep I have" he is a pedagogue without poetic afflatus. Standards of literary value, when not artificial, as in Samuel Johnson's case, have their place, but a place that is modest and not supreme.

*Literary Quality Should Be Subconscious.* The danger in unduly emphasizing the literary aspect of hymns is well expressed by Dr. Louis F. Benson: "The hazard is implicit in the very motive of hymn singing; the heightening of religious emotion. The danger is of mistaking sugary sentiment for true feeling and its rhetorical expression in 'soft, luxurious flow' for true poetry." In other words, the conscious seeking of the hymn writer after literary atmosphere and skill of treatment is fatal to genuineness of feeling, and to his success in producing a true hymn.

It will do no harm to iterate here that the two essentials to a successful hymn are spirituality and the power to express it so as to reach the understanding as well as the hearts of the people who are to sing. According to Paul, the first commandment in hymn writing and singing is: "I will sing with the spirit"; the second is like unto it: "I will sing with the understanding also."

## ~~~~~Chapter IV~~~~~

### THE EMENDATION OF HYMNS

#### I. THE CHANGES IN OUR HYMNS

*Early Changes.* The question of changes made in hymns by others than their writers deserves consideration. The point is not that the individual preacher is supposed to air his critical skill, but that he should understand why changes have been made by hymnal editors and better appreciate the principles involved and the literary niceties that are to be observed.

In the first compilations of hymnbooks, the rights of the authors of the individual hymns were entirely below the horizon. Many hymns were published without the names of their writers. To this day Charles Wesley's claim to "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," as against that of his brother John, depends wholly on considerations of style and form of stanza. There is not even a well-founded tradition.

It was the adaptation of the hymn to immediate actual needs that counted, not the writer. There was no moral copyright, much less legal, to stay the hand of the mutilator.

Watts did not hesitate to incorporate in his hymns lines and even whole stanzas from the hymns of others. John Wesley had no scruples in rewriting lines and stanzas and even whole hymns already in print. Toplady's alterations were often quite radical, as, for example, his drastic revision of Charles Wesley's "Blow ye the trumpet, blow"<sup>1</sup> to suit his intensely Calvinistic views.

*The Abuse of the Editorial Revision.* Dr. Worcester, in this country, who issued several collections of psalms and hymns, chiefly by Watts, was lavish in his alterations, mostly for the worse—so much so that the New England churches revolted. Lord Selborne said of these mutilations by many hands, "There is just enough of Watts left here to remind one of Horace's saying that 'you may know the remains of a poet even when he is torn to pieces.'"

The needless alteration of hymns that occurred in these early days is to be greatly deplored, especially of those most widely known. "Rock of Ages" and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" were fair targets for the editorial spear—out of the twenty-four lines of the former only eleven have escaped change. The line "When mine eyestrings break in death" was the only one peremptorily demanding a change, although a few other alterations may be accepted as slight improvements, as, for instance, "wounded" instead of "riven" side. So many people have committed this hymn with its differing lines to memory that when it is sung there is frequently the clash of these variations instead of the desirable uniformity of utterance.

The same is true of Wesley's hymn. In spite of John Wesley's warning against changes in the Methodist hymns—"Hymn-cobblers should not try to mend them. I really do not think they are able"—more than thirty variations occur in the first stanza of "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

The pity is that while uniformity is extremely desirable in these and many other hymns, it is now out of the question. The several variations have their partisan upholders.

James Montgomery spent years of his life amending and modifying the hymns of others, but asked that others should not change his verses. He insisted that if good people could not conscientiously adopt his doctrines and diction, it was a little questionable in them to impose theirs on him.

It is interesting to note that Montgomery could not "con-



scientifically adopt the doctrine and diction" of the first verse of Cowper's "There is a fountain filled with blood" and substituted a verse of his own of which he said, "I think my version is unexceptionable." But hymnal editors did not find it so and unanimously repudiated it. It was regarded as "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null."

*The Return to Originals.* This abuse of the editorial revision produced a reaction, and in the last half century, under the leadership of Dr. Louis F. Benson, a strong movement appeared among hymnal editors whose slogan was "Back to the originals!" In many cases that was not practicable, as the changes made were evident improvements, but the new tendency often proved to be a very useful one in restoring many a good original phrase in place of a much inferior alteration.

## II. PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY INVOLVED IN THESE CHANGES

*The Rights of the Original Writer.* There are some principles of equity that lie upon the surface. The writer of hymns has rights that must be recognized. His name should be given as its author. No name other than his own should be connected with the product of his pen. Unless there are sufficient reasons, the hymn should be given as he wrote it. If his name is given, no doctrine or experience should be interpolated. In business affairs that would be adjudged forgery in the second degree. If interpolations or changes of ideas become necessary for practical reasons, due notice should be given that the original writer is not responsible for the new ideas or the changes of phraseology. Unitarian hymnal editors have not always recognized this obligation. Our recent well-edited hymnals have been scrupulous in this particular.

*The Limits of the Author's Rights.* But there are distinct limits to the author's rights. If the hymnal were a merely literary compilation, the liberty to make changes would not

be admissible. But the hymnal is not an anthology; it is a collection of hymns for a definite and practical purpose of an exalted character—to aid congregations in the worship of God and in the realization of the spiritual aims he has set before them. That purpose has the right of eminent domain. If the original hymn has faulty lines or weak verses that jeopardize its otherwise practical effectiveness, competent editors of collections of hymns for congregational use have the right to amend, or condense, and so add to its usefulness in the work of the church, in so far as it does not affect the general spirit and tenor of the original. Isaac Watts recognized this principle, saying, "Where an unpleasing word is found, he that leads the worship may substitute a better one." Indeed, in 1737, he acknowledged that "Many a line needs the file to polish the roughness of it and many a thought wants richer language to adorn and make it shine—but I have at present neither inclination nor leisure to correct and I hope I never shall."

### III. EFFECT OF CHANGES ON QUALITY

*Loss of Original Writer's Vision.* It has been strongly urged that the emendation of hymns is dangerous to their quality; that the original writer was a better judge of both thought and phrasing than the cold critic whose very attitude prevents the high feeling that must inspire the most appealing forms of expression.

But the protest overlooks the fact that the very fervor and urge of fresh vision and its consequent emotion may prevent attention to nice details of phraseology or even to the proper balance of parts of a hymn. Furthermore, the writer with the creative urge may lack the critical faculty and fine discrimination necessary to polish up his verses after the impulse of writing has spent its force.

This being true, the editor who supplies the wanting critical attitude shows no presumption, provided his vision is clear

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and his skill in supplying more accurate, more melodious, or more practical phraseology adds value to the hymn. Martin Madan was no hymn writer, but when he rewrote Watts' hymn,

"He dies, the Heavenly Lover dies!  
The tidings strike the doleful sound  
On my poor heartstrings; deep he lies  
In the cold caverns of the ground,"

and gave us the noble stanza,

"He dies, the Friend of sinners, dies;  
Lo! Salem's daughters weep around;  
A solemn darkness veils the skies,  
A sudden trembling shakes the ground,"

he not only gave it a dignified and Biblical content and form, but he rescued the hymn for the spiritual edification of coming generations.

*Biblical Precedent.* There is plenty of Biblical precedent. The original compiler and editor of the Psalms, be he Asaph or Ezra, inserted a version of the eighteenth psalm differing from the original as found in the twenty-second chapter of Second Samuel. It cannot escape the most casual reader of the New Testament that its quotations from the Old Testament, whether poetical or prose, are by no means accurately reproduced. Moreover, the writers of psalm versions from Marot and Luther down to Watts did not hesitate to condense, alter, or interpolate new ideas in their transcriptions of the sacred originals. They had no sense of presumption; their minds were preoccupied with the practical ends they were trying to serve.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES MADE

It may be instructive to study more in detail the occasions for changes made in our hymns and learn the justification for

many of them. If some of them seem somewhat microscopic and even captious, none the less they make for exactness, for nice discrimination, and for more intelligent appreciation of the literary and spiritual values of our magnificent body of hymns.”<sup>2</sup>

*The Omission of Verses.* A very important change from the original of many hymns is the omission of some of the less valuable stanzas, or even a condensation of some of them by omitting unattractive lines.

“Oh for a thousand tongues to sing,” the fine hymn that opens all but recent Methodist hymnals, originally began, “Glory to God and praise and love,” and had eighteen stanzas. The hymn as now used consists of stanzas 7 to 12 of the original. Some hymnals omit stanza 10.

In the Trinity hymn sometimes ascribed to Charles Wesley, “Come, Thou Almighty King,” the second of the original five stanzas is always omitted:

“Jesus, our Lord, arise,  
Scatter our enemies,  
And make them fall;  
Let thine almighty aid  
Our sure defense be made,  
Our souls on thee be stayed;  
Lord, hear our call.”

The evident imitation of the second stanza of the British National anthem is too obvious:

“O Lord, our God, arise,  
Scatter his enemies,  
And make them fall.  
Frustrate their knavish tricks,  
Confound their politics,  
On Him our hearts we fix;  
God save the King.”

In Bishop Brooks’ original of “O little town of Bethlehem,”

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so widely known and used, the fourth stanza is omitted:

“Where children, pure and happy,  
Pray to the Blessed Child;  
Where misery cries out to thee,  
Son of the Mother mild;  
Where charity stands watching,  
And faith holds wide the door,  
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,  
And Christmas comes once more.”

The reasons are not far to seek: the double rhyme in the third line is so forced as to be awkward; the first two lines refer to Jesus in the third person, but the next two in the second; more important still, the stanza does not make a sufficient addition to the value of the hymn to warrant the added length.

The stanza,

“Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, thine,  
And bathed in its own blood,  
While all exposed to wrath divine,  
The glorious sufferer stood,”

if retained, despite its medieval picture of our suffering Lord, would have added nothing to Watts' noble hymn, “Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,” but rather would have hemmed the progress of its thought and feeling.

Few of the lovers of Robinson's classic hymn, “Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,” would have enjoyed singing and visualizing the omitted fourth stanza,

“O that day when freed from sinning,  
I shall see thy lovely face!  
*Richly clothed in blood-washed linen,*  
How I'll sing thy sovereign grace!”

A stanza was omitted from a hymn by Isaac Watts by Dr. Worcester, and he was compelled by public sentiment to replace it in his next collection. Who was right—Dr. Worcester, or Watts and the church public?

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"But while I bled and groaned and died,  
I ruined Satan's Throne;  
High on my cross I hung and spy'd  
The monster tumbling down."

What a travesty in this stanza of Christ's words, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"!

The omission of all the older hymns regarding "the state of the unpenitent dead" in our more recent hymnals is due to their usually rather lurid expressions, going beyond those of the Scriptures, to the reaction in the church at large against the rather mechanical and heartless emphasis of the painful doctrine—not only in hymns, but in sermons as well—and also to the realization that it is not a theme fitted for singing.

What modern congregation could sing Watts' stanza formulating the doctrine,

"Up to the courts where angels dwell,  
It [the soul] mounts triumphant there;  
Or devils plunge it down to hell  
In infinite despair"?

When we come to the hymns constructed by selecting stanzas from long poems—e.g., by John Keble or by John Greenleaf Whittier—we reach marvels of skill in selection and co-ordination that have greatly enriched English hymnody. *Reconstructing and Rewriting Faulty Hymns.* John Wesley inveighed against "hymn-cobblers," but he was a most efficient and skillful "hymn-cobbler" himself. He deserves high commendation for his literary skill and taste in cutting the rough diamonds that passed through his editorial hands. A few instances will illustrate his success.

"Before Jehovah's awful throne" is recognized as one of Watts' noblest hymns of worship. But it is Wesley's reconstruction that brought out its essential nobility.

Watts began it in rather mechanical fashion,

"Sing to the Lord with joyful voice,  
Let every land his name adore;

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The British Isles shall send the noise  
Across the ocean to the shore."

Wesley omitted this stanza entirely. Beginning with the second stanza,

"With gladness bow before his throne,  
And let his presence raise your joys;  
Know that the Lord is God alone  
And formed our soul and framed our voice"

(which shows that Watts' inspiration had begun to rise), Wesley transformed it into a majestic expression of pure worship:

"Before Jehovah's awful throne,  
Ye nations, bow with sacred joy;  
Know that the Lord is God alone,  
He can create and he destroy."

He was equally successful with Watts' third stanza:

"Infinite power, without our aid,  
Figured our clay to human mould;  
And when our wandering feet had strayed,  
He brought us to his sacred fold."

The first line is faulty: the accent of "infinite" is on the first syllable: Watts placed it on the second. The second line conveys no clear idea: how is clay "figured"? The third and fourth lines are bald and ordinary, lacking in poetic grace. See how deftly Wesley took Watts' material and gave it grace and dignity:

"His sovereign power, without our aid,  
Made us of clay and formed us men;  
And when like wand'ring sheep we strayed,  
He brought us to his fold again."

Transforming Watts' fourth stanza in like manner, he added a majestic fifth stanza of his own:

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“Wide as the world is thy command,  
Vast as eternity thy love;  
Firm as a rock thy truth shall stand  
When rolling years shall cease to move,”

completing one of the noblest hymns in the language.

Another hymn of Isaac Watts was enriched by passing through the hands of John Wesley. Besides correcting minor infelicities and curtailing its impracticable length, he rewrote the third stanza of the very popular hymn, “Come, ye that love the Lord,” transforming Watts’

“The God that rules on high  
And thunders when he please,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And manages the seas,”

into

“The God that rules on high,  
That all the earth surveys,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And calms the roaring seas.”

He might have gone further and obviated the break of the sentence occurring between the third and fourth stanzas. Some hymnal editors meet the difficulty by omitting both.

Rev. Martin Madan wrote no hymns; his only claim to immortality rests on his emendations of the hymns of greater men. But he well deserves to be remembered for some of his happy improvements of important hymns. His revision of Watts’ hymn “He dies! the Heavenly Lover dies!” has already been referred to.

Madan very fortunately changed Charles Wesley’s

“Hark how all the welkin rings,  
Glory to the King of Kings,”

into the much more poetical lines:



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"Hark! the herald angels sing,  
'Glory to the newborn King.'"

*Minor Felicitous Changes.* No small improvement in our hymns consists of the change of individual phrases because of misplaced accents, unfortunate consonantal combinations, inept metaphors, and phrases that are secular in spirit and associations.

In Cowper's "Jesus, where'er thy people meet," the second line had the word "inhabitest," difficult to sing; it was changed to "Dost dwell with those."

In Bishop Ken's "Evening Hymn" some bad cases of wrong accents have been corrected. "Under thy own almighty wings" now is "Beneath the shadow of thy wings," and "Triumphing rise at the last day" is become "Rise glorious at the judgment day."

Isaac Watts' theory that hymns should eschew poetic grace was carried too far—into euphonic slovenliness. In "Welcome, sweet day of rest" he wrote "One day amidst the place," ignoring the fact that "amidst" is not singable. "One day in such a place" is much more suave. In "Joy to the world! The Lord is come!" he wrote in the first line of stanza three "let sins and sorrows grow"; the excessive sibilation has been removed by using singular nouns.

In Charles Wesley's very useful hymn, "Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim," "The praises of Jesus" is substituted for "Our Jesus' praises," distributing the hissing s's more musically. The second and third stanzas are wisely omitted; few congregations could sing, with the solemnity the rest of the hymn calls for, such lines as

"When devils engage, the billows arise,  
And horribly rage and threaten the skies."

Charles Wesley in his hymn, "Jesus, let thy pitying eye," had a very realistic vision of the crucifixion and wrote "My

Saviour *gasped*, 'Forgive!'" which for singing purposes was well emended to "prayed." How did it escape the eagle eye of his brother John? Or did the influence of the Moravians, who were fond of these physical touches in writing of the crucifixion, affect both the Wesleys?

The "Protestant Te Deum," "All hail the power of Jesus' name," has fared well—or ill, according to the point of view—at the hands of "hymn-tinkers." Revisers have omitted

"Let highborn seraphs tune the lyre  
And, as they tune it, fall  
Before His face who tunes their choir,  
And crown him Lord of all."

They have transformed the stanza,

"Let every tribe and every tongue  
That bound creation's call  
Now shout in universal song  
The crowned Lord of all,"

into the nobler stanza,

"Let every kindred, every tribe  
On this terrestrial ball,  
To him all majesty ascribe,  
And crown him Lord of all."

Omitting one or two more stanzas, Dr. John Rippon has added a last stanza that puts a fitting climax to the whole hymn:

"Oh, that, with yonder sacred throng,  
We at his feet may fall!  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown him Lord of all."

Edward Mote began his widely-used hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less," with a "stumble on the threshold," writing "Nor earth nor hell my soul shall move," a very

unintelligent plunging *in medias res*. Was it Bradbury, who wrote the popular and effective tune that gave the hymn wings, that had the happy impulse to combine parts of the first and second stanzas, using the first two lines of the second stanza and the last two of the first? This gave an arresting first line and eliminated a line impossible to put on the lips of a general congregation, "Midst all the hell I feel within."

The very familiar and useful hymn of George Heath, "My soul, be on thy guard," is a notable example of the value of a competent editor's emendations. In stanza three Heath wrote,

"Ne'er think the vict'ry won,  
Nor *once at ease sit down*;  
*Thy arduous work* will not be done  
Till thou *hast got thy crown*."

Again in the fourth stanza he wrote,

"Fight on, my soul, till death.  
God will thy work applaud,  
Reveal his love at thy last breath,  
And take to his abode."

The improvement in both stanzas, as found in our hymnals, is obvious at a glance.

Even so finished a poet as the distinguished historian Milman disfigured his noble Palm Sunday hymn, "Ride on, ride on in majesty," by such a line as "Thine humble beast pursues its road," which Murray changed to the graceful and appealing line, "Saviour meek, pursue thy road."

Space is wanting to exhaust the various changes in hymns that are amply justified if their most effective use is to be secured. It is sufficient to say that changes of text must increase the perspicuity, precision, propriety, and force of the hymn. Single phrases may wisely be modified if a change corrects a wrong accent, makes a line more euphonious, adds to its vividness, expressiveness, or vigor, increases its dignity, clarifies the sense, or better adapts it to public use.

## ~~~~~Chapter V~~~~~

### THE CONTENT OF THE HYMN

THE hymn is not an independent entity, sufficient unto itself, whose whole purpose is to be beautiful and to give pleasure to those responsive to its charm. The hymn has a definite message, is big with purpose.

It is related to its writer in satisfying the urge for expression of ideas that will give him power over the thoughts and feelings of others, or of emotions that demand to be voiced forth in the mystic expressiveness of rhythm and rhyme.

It is related to God as the original source of its impulse and as the recipient of its response in love and praise.

It is related to the church in the aid it affords to its collective life and to the reader or singer whose spirituality is to be inspired, developed, and expressed.

It is the content expressing these several relations and purposes that separates the hymn from purely literary ideals and criticisms.

#### I. ITS RELATION TO GOD

*Thanksgiving.* The first impulse is a recognition of the blessings and privileges that God bestows upon his creatures in general and upon the writer and the singer in particular. There is consciousness of self in this expression of gratitude. The soul still has its feet upon the ground.

There is nothing unworthy in this recognition of self as the recipient of God's favor, for the soul honors God in its realization of its dependence on him and in its clear vision of the source of its blessedness. Indeed, God asks it as his due. *Prayer for Future Blessing.* The cynic who declares that gratitude is usually tinctured with the hope of favors to come may not properly represent the soul as it gives thanks to God, but there is a kinship between thanksgiving and prayer that makes it easy and logical to pass from the one to the other. The memory of benefits received inevitably suggests needs yet to be supplied.

In its relation to God the hymn may well be a vehicle for the prayer that envisages the spiritual lack that God alone can supply, and vitalizes the recognition with a desirous urgency that must characterize true prayer.

Here again we find not only divine authority, but encouragement and assurance. Whether the hymn is an individual or a collective prayer matters not. The individual need is also a need common to all petitioners, and the prayer by a congregation is still the individual prayer of its units, only intensified objectively toward God and subjectively toward the singers by its mass expression. This intensification is multiplied not arithmetically but geometrically.

*Adoration.* The hymn of adoration lifts the soul into a higher plane, into a contemplation of the glory and majesty of the infinite perfections of its God in which self is forgotten and a consciousness of the infinitude of divine beauty, nobility, and spiritual elevation remains to thrill the soul. It rises on wings of selfless delight and rejoicing in God into a very ecstasy that only song can express.

Whether the soul stands on some high peak of earth and surveys the billowing world that stretches far and wide with its beetling cliffs and rocky headlands, its forests and fields, its meadows and orchards, filled with the overwhelming mystery of life and force obeying implicitly the laws formulated

only in inherent nature; or gazes into the great vault of the sky, with the silent majesty of circling stars and developing universes, it will find the anonymous hymn of more than a century ago voicing its deepest awe, its noblest joy:

"Praise the Lord! ye heavens adore him,  
Praise him, angels in the height;  
Sun and moon rejoice before him,  
Praise him, all ye stars of light."

When the soul on some mountaintop of inner experience and vision glimpses something of the sublimity of the divine character, its justice, its truth, its purity, its invincible power and will guided by infinite knowledge and wisdom, its boundless mercy and forgiving grace flowing from the eternal Source of its all-embracing love, again it can adopt as its very own the solemn notes of Tersteegen, echoed in English by John Wesley:

"Lo! God is here; let us adore  
And own how dreadful is this place;  
Let all within us feel his power,  
And humbly bow before his face."

This is the highest office of the hymn and should be made its largest use; in no other way can the minds and hearts of Christian worshipers be filled and thrilled with a consciousness of an indwelling God as by hymns of praise, fully comprehended and sung with unflawed sincerity.

*The Hymn of Communion.* Beyond the hymn of exultant praise is the hymn of communion with God, where the soul expresses its joy, not simply in the objective glories of the divine nature, but in actual communion, companionship, and conscious unity with God in desire, ideals, and purposes. The soul thinks the thoughts of God, delights in what God approves, walks in his ways with spontaneous gladness, and lives in absolute harmony with his will, not mechanically under a stress of duty, but by urge of the deepest depths of

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the soul. Objective praise may pull out all the stops of the soul's enthusiasm and the high imaginings of the spirit, but the hymn of communion may express itself in tenderness and sweetness, in upwelling love and quiet affection. It often is a personal rather than a collective hymn.

## II. RELATION TO THE SINGER

*The Hymn of Emotion.* Given a definite emotion based on realization of some religious truth, man will urgently call for some expression of it, directly by speaking or writing, or by means of some provided method.<sup>1</sup> Christians are stimulated by being impressed by the experiences of others. There is a blessed contagion in these expressions of the profound experiences of the saints of God as found in the hymnbooks of all our churches. One feels the accelerated spiritual heartbeat as one reads (or, better yet, sings) Watts' emotional cry as he stands before the cross of Christ:

"When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride."

Who can fail to follow him in his final consecration,

"Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all"?

Medley's hymn, "Oh, could I speak the matchless worth," in not a single phrase directly addresses the Deity. It is a purely subjective expression of delight in the Lord Jesus Christ; and yet how impressive, how delightful, how eminently worthy of the feelings of any great congregation, is this hymn of Christian joy.

The hymn of emotion, therefore, supplies the soul's demand, for it satisfies the instinct for expression. It clarifies the intellectual basis of the emotion and in so doing intensifies it.

The collective singing and mass expression of a common emotion intensify it still further and fit it more fully to affect the will and the character, and so give permanence to the influence of the truth underlying the feeling. Where at the beginning the truth is but dimly perceived and passively accepted, the resulting shallow feeling will be deepened. In this way the hymn becomes a very generator of desirable religious emotion.

*The Hymn of Inspiration.* It follows that the hymn may be a means of stimulating interest and enthusiasm in connection with a topic or proposed course of action, and may become the hymn of inspiration. Any line of thought or method of presentation appealing to any emotion or impulse that creates courage, hopefulness, confidence, assurance of success, will be pertinent and desirable. The intenser element of direct exhortation may be added, making a hortative hymn of one of mere inspiration.

*The Hymn of Personal Experience.* The hymn of personal experience differs from that of emotional expression in being more subjective, more analytical of the effect produced on the mind by the apprehension of the religious truth. The latter is based on the realization of some objective truth or doctrine, while the hymn of personal experience emphasizes the inner experience in prayer, in specific exercise of faith, in a reaction of the soul to some accomplished task, or to a season of communion with God. The hymn of the blind poet, George Matheson, which has been so widely used,

"O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul on Thee,"

is distinctly a hymn of Christian experience; while Isaac Watts gives poignant expression to the emotions of the Christian, as he contemplates the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, borne to atone for his sins,



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“Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?  
And did my Sovereign die?  
Would he devote that sacred head  
For sinners such as I!”

The hymn of personal experience has been rather heatedly objected to by critics like Bishop Wordsworth. In some cases these “I and My” hymns have been rewritten to meet the objection.

These critics who find their own “ego” offended by the apparent emphasis of the hymn writer’s “ego” forget some rather important factors in the situation.

1. It would have been rather presumptuous on the part of the writer to speak for the collective “We” and “Us” who presumably were to sing his verses.

2. As a spontaneous expression of personal experience, the hymn had to be individualistic. Not often, if ever, are particular religious experiences common to a body of believers at a given moment.

3. The high peaks of religious experience which are most valuable as furnishing ideals and stimulus to the members of a singing congregation can be reached only by individuals, not by a mass of people. To restrict the expression of religious experience to that common to all Christians, would be to omit the most inspiring and helpful hymns, and keep our song service at a dead level of inferior value.

4. It must not be forgotten that it is not the congregation that sings; it is its individual units! The congregation is an abstraction; a merely mental conception. The singing of each member is fundamentally as purely individual as if he were absolutely alone! Hence the “I and My” hymn is entirely fitting. Each sings what is, or ought to be, his own individual experience. Indeed, he makes his best contribution to the collective effect if he is intensely individualistic in his singing.

5. In all ages this individualistic participation in mass singing has been natural and spontaneous. The children of Israel

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sang an individualistic "I and My" hymn in rejoicing over the army of Pharaoh. The psalms are largely "I and My" hymns of praise, of prayer, and of confession. David sings, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

It is too much to expect that every singer shall apprehend the full import of the words he sings; to accuse him of insincerity and hypocrisy if he fails to rise to their level, or if he takes them on his lips thoughtlessly, is uncharitable. In most cases the fault lies with the leader of the service who does not bring out the meaning and does not prepare the minds and hearts of the singers for the hymn about to be sung.

It is, therefore, not a question of the first person singular, but of the kind of personal experience that finds a voice. Is it artificial or genuine? Is it morbid or wholesome? Is it depressing or stimulating to the spiritual life? Is it an experience to which all have attained or may attain, in terms all can accept, or is it morbid, fanatical, extravagant?

No congregation should be expected to sing offhand with Faber,

"I love Thee so, I know not how  
My transports to control,"

or

"Oh, dearest Jesus, I have grown  
Childish with love of thee."

There are other limits that need to be considered. A hymn may properly be the vehicle for a confession of sin or of spiritual unworthiness; but it should not take exaggerated forms of expression that only a few could honestly adopt. The same is somewhat true of hymns of consecration. Some hymns are title deeds to gifts to Jesus Christ so comprehensive that few could sincerely subscribe to them. All these hymns, though they may have been spontaneous outbursts from the hearts of the writers, will seem unreal and forced to the singer,

and will only aggravate the mechanical unreality and the unwitting insincerity that vitiate the average service of song.

*The Hymn of Meditation.* The hymn of meditation is less emotional than that of personal experience or feeling. It is quiet in rhetorical style and gentle in mood. Its purpose is not didactic, although it often superficially seems to be so. It is occupied with doctrinal truth only in an inferential way. It contemplates all religious truth, whether doctrinal or ethical, in an objective, impersonal way and notes its implications and corollaries. It is, therefore, emotionally negative, blending with the other elements of the service rather than controlling them.

Perhaps as typical an instance as can be cited is Bishop Bickersteth's

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?  
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

Charles Wesley's meditation on the Christian's duties, "A charge to keep I have," is another hymn of this class. Faber's "There's a wideness in Gods mercy" ("Was there ever kinder shepherd") is also in the meditative mood.

*The Hymn of Exhortation.* At first blush it may seem a little absurd that the members of a congregation should sing at each other such a hymn as "Stand up, stand up for Jesus" or "Work, for the night is coming." But this is an artificial and not a genuine objection. The instinct of the human race is toward the singing of just such hortatory songs as these. The Marseillaise Hymn, which was one of the strongest influences leading to the French Revolution, is simply an exhortation, but it swept the French people off their feet and helped prepare the way for the great transformation of the social structure of the nation. The Church has gone on producing and singing these hortatory hymns throughout all generations from the time of David until now, because the impulse is native to the human heart.

*The Didactic Hymn.* The hymn may be used to teach truth

as well as to express emotion. If we are to accept Paul's statements regarding the use of song in the churches in his early day, the didactic hymn is the oldest form of the Christian hymn. "Teaching and admonishing one another" is his phrase in Colossians 3: 16. Indeed, we can go back to Moses for authority for it, for the ninetieth Psalm is largely didactic. In the Psalms we find more instruction than worship. There is really no reason why an assembly should not sing truth, as well as recite it, as it does in the Apostles' or in the Nicene Creed.

The didactic value of the hymn is too great that we should refuse its help in laying a foundation of doctrine in the hearts of the people of God. Never was it more necessary than now. It is significant of John Wesley's appreciation of its didactic value that in his announcement of his hymnal of 1780, *The Large Hymn Book*, he refers to his grouping of the hymns under subjects, making the hymnal "a little body of experimental and practical divinity."

Many of our most frequently used hymns are unfeignedly didactic. Bishop Wordsworth's "O day of rest and gladness" is a resume of the arguments for the validity of the Christian Sabbath. "The Church's one foundation" is one of a series of hymns by Samuel J. Stone expounding the Apostles' Creed. Heber's hymn, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" is suffused with poetical feeling, but is none the less a didactic hymn emphasizing the doctrine of the Trinity.

At the same time, this religious truth must have a poetic element. It is the great value of a hymn as a teaching method that it puts heart and feeling into the doctrine it expresses, and so gives it reality and appeal. Despite Dr. Austin Phelps' rejection of Montgomery's "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire" as "without the wings of song," the Church at large has been singing it for a century. Even if the last stanza were omitted, it would still be a good hymn, because the doctrine of prayer is clothed in such beautiful and inspiring language that it is

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eminently fitted for the expression of a congregation in song. *The Doctrinal Hymn.* The doctrinal hymn is simply a limited form of the didactic hymn in that it is devoted to the promulgation of the leading Christian doctrines, while the general didactic hymn may be used to inculcate any truth or duty, whether of a fundamental character or not.

The use of the hymn to teach the doctrines of the Church has numerous advantages. It is clear and succinct, not obscuring the truth with philosophical or metaphysical subtleties. It is dogmatic and not argumentative. It has the mnemonic advantage of rhythm and rhyme and is easily remembered. It has the inspiration of collective singing. Above all it is vivid and poetical, emotionalizing and vitalizing what in the philosopher's hands becomes abstract and dry.

America's most distinguished hymnologist clearly differentiates the doctrinal theologian and the doctrinal hymn writer: "The theologian and the hymn writer traverse day by day the same country, the Kingdom of our Lord. They walk the same paths; they see the same objects; but in their methods of observation and in their reports of what they see, they differ. So far as theology is a science, the theologian deals simply with the topography of the country: he explores, he measures, he expounds. So far as hymn-writing is an art, the writer deals not with topography, but with the landscape: he sees, he feels, he sings. The difference in method is made inevitable by the variance of temperament of the two men, the diversity of gifts. But both methods are as valid as inevitable. Neither man is sufficient in himself as an observer or a reporter. It is the topography and the landscape together that make the country what it is. It is didactics and poetry together that can approach the reality of the spiritual Kingdom." <sup>2</sup>

It follows that the doctrinal hymn is not simply reluctantly admissible, it is actually peremptorily necessary if the doctrines of the Christian faith are to be impressed upon each rising generation. This function of the hymn is all the more impor-

tant because of the decline of doctrinal preaching. It is the "substance of doctrine" the hymns supply rather than the rigid philosophical shell which the creeds and the catechism offer. It is this shell that is "dry," not the realities it too often hides.

*The Homiletical Hymn.* The homiletical hymn is a homily, as its name implies—a sermonette. The term refers to its form, not to its content, for that is usually doctrinal and always didactic. It is sermonic because it proceeds from point to point, leading the way to a practical application. This form of hymn makes up the great body of the older hymnody, because it was written by sermonizers who applied homiletical methods to their hymns.

Take Doddridge's hymn, "Ye servants of the Lord": the first stanza makes the general appeal for service; the second emphasizes the need of readiness for that service; the third, attention to the Lord's commands; the fourth exclaims over the joy and the reward of service; the fifth, the honors that Christ shall heap on his servant. That makes a fine outline for a sermon!

The homiletical hymn was often dry because the sermon was dry. They were both too frequently "proses" in a sense different from the medieval use of the word.

*The Hymn of Propaganda.* The hymn of propaganda calls for consideration. It is a didactic hymn, of course, but its purpose is not to express the fundamental doctrines of the faith, but to urge some subordinate article of it out of all proportion to its intrinsic importance, or to win adherents for some new religious ideas. There are hymns of Perfectionism, of Holiness, of Unity, of Premillennialism, of Second Adventism, of Christian Science, of phases of Theosophy, that fall within this category.

The spiritual value of some of these is not to be underrated, but each hymn must be judged on its own merits. The danger of exaggeration is the chief point calling for circum-

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spection. Hymns of propaganda criticizing or antagonizing the Christian Church must be rejected.

*Hymns of the Social Gospel.* A few years ago, when the sociological aspect of Christianity won wide attention, it was seriously proposed to rewrite the whole hymnbook and inject the "Social Gospel." A few desirable hymns on Brotherhood were written which fill out a previously somewhat neglected rubric. Brotherhood is not a discovery of the twentieth century, but has been an integral part of Christianity from the beginning and was never so fully exemplified as at that period.

In so far as the "Social Gospel" is simply the application of the gospel of Christ to old wrongs that yet need to be righted, like slavery, and war, and alcoholism, or to new social complexes in our modern economic life where there is injustice, or where there is need of help for body, mind, or soul, hymns may prove desirable helps. They will, however, be written spontaneously, not as propaganda, and will be used freely in so far as there is practical and emotional justification for them. The onward progress of the Kingdom in these unfinished tasks will most likely depend on the stimulation of the great motives that have given victory in the past. It is the appeal to these motives that gives vitality to such a hymn as "Where cross the crowded ways of life," by Frank Mason North.

*Special Hymns.* It is a little difficult to supply hymns for subordinate topics which do not stir the spiritual pulses, and hence the poorest hymns in our hymnbooks are found in these divisions. The doctrines of Human Depravity, Regeneration, Sanctification, the State of the Impenitent Dead, do not lend themselves to attractive hymnic expression.

These hymns have no wings; they are unemotional and without appeal to the imagination. Yet the selectors of hymns who have a purely homiletical point of view demand that a hymnal shall supply appropriate lyrics to fit subjects and occasions that have no lyrical possibilities. If the demands of symmetrical completeness in a hymnal, or of close fitness of

theme in a service, must be met, then one must be content with prosaic verses lacking in poetic charm or emotional inspiration.

*The Great Hymnic Themes.* There are certain doctrines, certain experiences, that appeal so strongly to Christian hearts that the impulse to write and sing about them far exceeds that growing out of less general, less striking themes. There may be a great difference in the favorite themes of different persons, under different circumstances, in different generations. The Latin medieval hymnists greatly stressed the suffering Christ; Watts sang of the majesty and glory of God and of his reign in the moral and spiritual world, and his hymns are found largely in the purely worshipful rubrics of our hymnals; Charles Wesley wrote in the midst of a great revival, and his hymns emphasize the plan of salvation and voice the personal experiences of the saved. In our own day the ideas of service, of public welfare, of works of philanthropy and mercy, and of social justice find expression.

The supreme theme, of course, is Christ. Whatever phases of Christian doctrine or experience may seem to absorb the mind of any generation, still the songs cluster about the person of Jesus Christ. As Dr. Austin Phelps eloquently insists, "here the rapture of holy song culminates on earth, as it does in heaven. Here every grace of religious character, and every experience of a devout life, has found freedom to express itself in hymns of worship. Where can another such body of sacred poetry be found in any language, as that which comprises the Christology of the songs of the Church?"

This hymnody is all the more appealing in that it sings a living and not a dead Christ, a present personality, near and dear, and not merely a historical character. The singer does not strain his power of thought and elevation of expression to hymn adequately the perfections of an infinite God, but spontaneously rejoices in a Friend who "sticketh closer than a brother"!



## ~~~~~Chapter VI~~~~~

### THE GOSPEL HYMN

IF this were a purely scholastic and literary treatise on the hymnody of the Church, the subject of this chapter might be ignored; but this discussion purports to be practical, and the Gospel hymn is too large a factor in the life and work of our churches to be thus brushed aside. It is a conservative estimate to say that four out of five churches in our land make use of these hymns to a greater or less extent. They even elbow their way into the most exclusive hymnals issued by ecclesiastical authorities. Collections of them are found not only in rural or village communities, but in urban churches as well. Great denominational publishing houses issue them by the hundred thousand. They are heard in the great ecclesiastical gatherings and conventions of the land. Great evangelistic movements depend on them for inspiration and for aggressive energy.

Yet the Gospel hymn has been treated as a convenient "punching bag" for the literary and musical idealist. One respects the antagonistic attitude of the high liturgist to whom the form is so significant, or of the literary or scholarly man whose susceptibilities are outraged by the acknowledged shortcomings and banalities of many of these popular religious lyrics. Nonetheless, one is astonished that persons of high intelligence, in their devotion to exclusively literary and

musical standards, should be blind to the great spiritual value of the better specimens of this indiscriminately condemned class of hymns, and to the extraordinary effectiveness and the immense results in aggressive religious work which this people's hymnody has demonstrated.

This is really only the recrudescence of an ancient feud between the conception of the hymn as exclusively worshipful and belonging to the liturgical service, and as the free lyrical expression of the religious life of the people adapted to all phases of Christian life—individual, domestic, and social, as well as ecclesiastical. As the church life of the early Christians began to crystallize, the former improvisations were discouraged. In time, the service of song was taken from the laity in the interest of greater dignity and churchliness. The Arian controversy with its hymnic outburst freed the wings of popular religious song, only for them to be restrained again by the rigid formalism organized and enforced by Gregory the Great.

The Waldenses, the Hussites, the Lollards, each group had its own popular hymnody. In the general breaking of bonds in the Reformation, the popular hymns of Huss and Luther and their associates, and the metrical psalms of Marot and Sternhold set to popular secular melodies, were the first manifestations of the new freedom.

The same outcry was heard against the hymns of Watts, and a little later against those of the Wesleys, not only in Great Britain, but in New England as well. In the latter the outcry was heard against the "camp-meeting ditties" of the aggressive Methodists as they spread into the West.

Even now, in Germany there is frequent protest against the use in church service of the simpler "folk" hymns, like "Harre des Herrn" (Wait on the Lord), "Ich will streben" (I will strive), and "Sei getreu bis in den Tod" (Be faithful unto death), because they are more recent in origin and have not the severe dignity of the older hymns and chorals.

And so the feud between the devout formalism of the liturgical spirit and the free attitude of aggressive spirituality has gone on from century to century and from land to land, and will continue to do so "until He come."

*Lack of Discrimination.* There is an utter lack of discrimination shown in the opposition to Gospel hymns.

It is no more true that all Gospel and Sunday-school hymns are crude, illiterate, and undignified than is the anti-foreign Chinese's charge that all Americans are liars and thieves. Many of the Gospel hymns were written by devout, cultured people of high intelligence. Fanny Crosby has had wide recognition, and there have been many others of equal ability, but lacking her adventitious appeal for sympathy. There are many Gospel hymns which deserve the harshest denunciations that have been expressed. In a people's hymnody that was inevitable; but there are others so fine that the line of essential values between the Gospel and the standard hymn is difficult to trace. Lowell Mason and Thomas Hastings' *Spiritual Songs* was practically a people's Gospel songbook, used for the same purposes and in the same relative spirit, and largely made up of new materials in text and music just like a modern Gospel songbook, being even issued in parts. Among its new hymns were Palmer's "My faith looks up to Thee" and Smith's "The morning light is breaking," now recognized as leading standard hymns. The same is true of Gilmore's "He leadeth me, O blessed thought!" and Kate Hankey's "I love to tell the story" and Mrs. Hawks' "I need Thee every hour." Mrs. Gates' "I will sing you a song of that beautiful land," E. E. Hewitt's "More about Jesus would I know," Hopper's "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me," Stite's "Simply trusting every day," Walford's "Sweet hour of prayer," Hunter's "In the Christian's home in glory," Bliss' "Almost persuaded," Spafford's "It is well with my soul," and Pres. Dr. J. E. Rankin's "God be with you till we meet again" are none of them illiterate or undignified. Indeed, many of the writers of these despised hymns

were college professors, clergymen of high standing, editors, women of education and culture and of profound spiritual life. Many Gospel song writers are far and away superior to the average of the hymnists of the eighteenth century—indeed, have written nothing so unpoetical and so distinctly offensive to good taste as some of the hymns published by Watts and Wesley, the hymnic giants of that age.

There is an impulse to distinguish between Gospel hymns and Gospel songs, accepting the former and rejecting the latter; but that is playing with words. Good Gospel songs are to be baptized Gospel hymns and allowed to enter the golden gates of approved hymnody. Others draw the line at the end of the Moody and Sankey campaigns, closing the canon at that time and regarding all later Gospel songs as apocryphal! But the worst specimens that have appeared were issued before that date and many excellent ones have been written since. No such mechanical criteria can be applied. The acid test of actual usefulness must be employed with Gospel songs as it was to formal hymns. That many of the former have won a permanent place without the emendation needed by the latter shows how unjustified is the indiscriminate condemnation of this whole class of sacred lyrics.

*Wrong Assumptions of the Opposition.* In much of the discussion there seems to be an underlying assumption that there is an inherent antagonism between the standard and the Gospel hymn, that the latter is intended to displace the former. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is true there is an occasional church where the standard hymns are neglected, but they are a negligible minority. The current Gospel song collections practically all supply a large department of standard hymns and their tunes, in many cases all that are in actual general use. The value of the standard hymn is recognized everywhere as having a most important place in the work of the church.

But its very dignity and strength occasion the limitations

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to its use, and beyond those limitations the Gospel hymn comes as a complementary help. The wise preacher does not use Gospel hymns in his formal, worshipful services, but finds them indispensable in popular evening services, where not awe and solemnity but spirit and aggressiveness, and appeal to the person of average or less culture, are needed. His prayer meeting and other subordinate meetings of groups need the individual feeling and intimacy with religious things supplied by the Gospel hymns.

In evangelistic meetings a few of the standards can express the high peaks of interest, but the Gospel songs lead up to those heights. The great revivals of the nineteenth and of the early decades of this century were distinctly characterized by the use of Gospel songs, many of them not even of the higher type.

*Unfairness in Comparisons Made.* While the worst specimens of Gospel hymns have usually been selected as the basis of attack, the very best of the standard hymns have been held up as the criterion of value; the utter unfairness of such comparison is evident enough. Gospel hymns should be judged by their best specimens when compared with standard hymns.

The inequity of such a comparison is made more flagrant by the fact that these standard hymns, only hundreds in number, which are justly appreciated and lauded, are the survivors of multiplied tens of thousands that were written through the generations. Of the more than seven hundred written by Isaac Watts, twenty-three appear in the recent *Presbyterian Hymnal*. Of the nearly seven thousand hymns of Charles Wesley, the new *Methodist Hymnal*, naturally biased in judgment by tradition, uses only fifty-five, while the *New Presbyterian Hymnal* finds space for only eighteen. This tremendous mortality is not necessarily due to offensive weakness and faults, for hundreds served their day and generation most acceptably and well. In like manner the older Gospel hymns, which have had their day of usefulness are

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fading out of these collections, making way for new ones that express the feelings of the present generation more intimately. This is as it should be.

But when the detractor of current Gospel hymns finds some delectable bit of vulgarity or of literary clumsiness or of grammatical solecism, let him remember that Watts published lines like these:

“Tame heifers here their thirst allay  
And for the stream wild asses bray.”

“I’ll purge my family around  
And make the wicked flee”;

and that John Wesley allowed his brother to publish

“Idle men and boys are found  
Standing on the devil’s ground;  
He will give them work to do,  
He will pay their wages too.”

Remember also that William Cowper, the poet acclaimed by literary critics as the father of a new movement in poetical writing, issued such a stanza as this:

“Not such as hypocrites suppose  
Who with a graceless heart  
Taste not of Thee, but drink a dose  
Prepared by Satan’s art.”

If the great poets and hymn writers of that age wrote such lines, what must have been the character of the verses of the obscure scribblers and poetasters of their day!

Not only do the best of the standard hymns alone survive, but those survivors have been rewritten and amended by a half-century of editors and hymn revisers, their revisions being re-revised by succeeding critics, as we have seen in a previous chapter. Every line and phrase has been submitted again and again to the microscope of the literary critic, until we have

a body of hymns established in every detail by the consensus of the best literary minds of the last century. This is no derogation of our accepted hymns, but a great advantage to them; but it must not be overlooked in making a fair comparison.

*Criteria for Evaluation.* Much of the criticism of the Gospel hymn is due to excessive emphasis on the literary and poetical aspects of the verses to which objection is made. But we have already insisted on the fact that these are not the final criteria of the value of hymns, although they are important factors not to be overlooked.

Speaking of a hymnal containing material of inferior literary quality, Dr. Austin Phelps, of Andover Seminary, who shared with his colleague in the faculty of that institution the honor of being the fathers of American hymnology, wisely remarks: "It is a shallow judgment either to approve or to condemn such a work in the spirit of a connoisseur in aesthetics. The very conditions of excellence in a body of popular psalmody must extend its limits out of the range of a purely Attic taste."

The approval or rejection of a hymn, or of a body of hymns, is not a question of personal taste or liking, nor even of personal religious reactions, but a question of the needs of the people to be stimulated and helped, and the results of interest and spiritual impression secured among them by the hymns under consideration.

*Gospel Hymns and the Unsaved.* There is a distressing lack of understanding both of the real function of the hymn and of the needs of the body of Christians as a whole, and even a greater ignorance of the psychology of reaching the unsaved. If the body of our standard hymns fails to develop needed interest among a large element in our churches, how much less will it appeal to these outside the fold! If these intellectually and culturally less privileged masses in and out of the Church are to follow the Apostolic example and "sing with the understanding," the songs must lie within the range of

their understanding. Professor A. S. Hoyt, D.D., of Auburn Theological Seminary, sums up the situation very wisely: "A few of the modern revival hymns make quick appeal to the modern heart, are easily sung, and may be teachers of religious life. The majority of them are shallow in thought and without musical worth. But in all matters of education we must help men as we find them and patiently lift them to better things."

*Gospel Hymns and the Demands of Worship.* Perhaps the most misleading assumption among those who reject the Gospel hymn is that the chief use of hymns is in worship. They will sing didactic hymns, hortative hymns, inspirational hymns, addressed solely to human ears and hearts in the stated church service and then cast out the Gospel hymn because it is not fitted for solemn worship. That attitude conceives the Divine Being as a literary connoisseur, or as a music critic who applies conventional academic criteria in accepting what his people bring him. Their slogan is that we must bring to God only our best, insisting that anything but our best is an insult to him, forgetting that we do not bring the hymn, but the spiritual results of the hymn in devotion and love and consecration, and that hymn which produces these in the given congregation is the best.

Moreover, the approach to God is not the sole function of effective hymns; it may instead be the approach to men. The best hymn in that department is the one that succeeds most fully in affecting the souls to be influenced. There, not the abstract values of the hymn count, but its psychological adaptation to the actual mental, moral, and spiritual condition of the minds and hearts to be helped, not overlooking even the physical factors essential to religious results.

Furthermore, there are lines of church activity which need the religious atmosphere and suggestiveness but are concerned with social and administrative work, with the temporalities of church life, for which many of these Gospel hymns are



eminently fitted. There are campaigns, drives, and movements that need musical help such as many of the less subjectively pious Gospel hymns can give.

*Gospel Hymns in the Preparatory Service.* There are large and miscellaneous church gatherings where there is no preparation of mind to sing worthily and deeply religious hymns, and where it would be a sacrilege to ask the miscellaneous crowd to take upon their lips such a hymn as "O Love that wilt not let me go" or "Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above." Better to sing the semi-religious and shallow "Brighten the corner where you are" until the crowd has been psychically organized.

*Gospel Hymns in the Laboratory.* When we come to organized campaigns to persuade unconverted persons, old and young, to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, the need of these informal, stimulating, emotional folk songs becomes immediately apparent. Awe, impressiveness, spiritual elevation of mind, such as are supposed to be produced by the standard hymns, are not the stimuli that create aggressiveness of mind among Christian workers, nor are they calculated to awaken a response among the unspiritual. It is proved as surely by actual laboratory experiment that Gospel songs produce the conditions needed for securing a religious revival as that hydrochloric acid and water poured over zinc clippings will produce hydrogen.

Lord Shaftesbury, the great English philanthropist and Christian worker, speaking in Ireland in the interest of evangelistic work there, said: "Therefore go on circulating the Scriptures. I should have been glad to have had also the circulation of some well-known hymns, because I have seen the effect produced by those of Moody and Sankey. If they would only return to this country, they would be astonished at seeing the influence exerted by those hymns which they sing."

It is worthy of incidental note that the most of those to

whom the Gospel hymn is anathema are not much in sympathy with any evangelistic methods; nay more, they seem to shrink from popular manifestations of religious life. They have sharpened the edge of their religious refinement until it will no longer cut.

*The Advantages of Gospel Hymns.* These Gospel hymns have several distinct advantages that should not be overlooked. They are simple, easily understood by everybody, quickly appropriated as his own expression by the most limited in education or culture. They are quite emotional, expressing feeling and creating it. They are spontaneous and free, with no labored subtlety or recondite allusion. They are usually more or less rhythmical and stimulating, physically as well as mentally. They are adaptable to various situations and states of feeling. Even more than standard hymns they express personal religious experiences, and are more direct in their hortative method. The chorus, if intelligently written, emphasizes the fundamental idea of the hymn in an unescapable way. As a tool for aggressive effort it has no substitute, and but one rival—earnest and spirit-filled preaching.

*Discrimination in the Use of Gospel Songs.* It should be said, however, that the inventory of its values mentioned above applies to only a comparatively small part of the Gospel songs offered to the public, just as the accepted standard hymns are a very small part of the formal hymns from which they have been gleaned. Usually its faults are aridity, vapidness, and shallowness. Yet in all these shortcomings, specimens of equal weakness and futility can be found in verses by accepted hymn writers.

The better Gospel songs are after all the sincere expression of a certain stage of culture of mind and soul. That stage may not be high nor admirable, but it must be allowed its spontaneous expression.

Every generation has had its own ephemeral hymnody and will continue to have it in spite of all the scolding critics.

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When our religious people stop writing and singing new songs and are satisfied to sing over and over again the songs of preceding ages, it will prove that the process of ossification has set in and that vital force is passing away. Better that literary unskillfulness and mediocre musical talent shall continue to write, better to have ephemeral, shallow, and unsatisfying songs written by the thousands, than that the impulse to express spontaneously the vital godliness within should be entirely lost.



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THE SINGING CHURCH

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PART II  
HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF HYMNS



## ~~~~~Chapter VII~~~~~

### APOSTOLIC ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

IN considering the origin of the Christian hymn, one must remember that it is an outgrowth of man's innate impulse to express his feelings in hymns and songs. That impulse is constitutional; man sings because he was so made that he cannot help singing.

Furthermore, the Christian hymn is the natural development of the Hebrew psalm, just as Christianity is the consummation of the Jewish religion. The two systems of religion are related as closely as the foundation and the superstructure of a great temple. We shall find the Hebrew voice of worship not only leading the songs of the Apostolic Church, but through all the succeeding ages sounding the controlling note of all Christian praise. David and the sons of Asaph led the choirs and congregations in chapel and church and cathedral as truly as they did those in the temple and synagogues. Christianity gave the Psalms a larger, more inspiring message and a more literary and more musical setting; but the thrumming of David's harp has been heard through all the long centuries and is still heard around the world.

The Greek atmosphere in which the Early Church developed might be supposed to have influenced the character of the Apostolic hymnody; but the Greek Christians were not literary in culture, and the Greek religion had no congrega-

tional singing. It took several generations before it began to affect the form and music of the Christian hymnody, but eventually it was to become a formative force.

## I. SACRED SONG IN THE NEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH

*The Rise of Sacred Song in Apostolic Times.* But when the baptism of the Holy Spirit vitalized and organized the Christian Church, the tide of sacred song began to swell. It had a great heritage from the dying Jewish church: its fundamental ideas, its laws, its prophets, its hope of the Messiah now transformed into a reality; but not the least of its inheritances were the habit of praise and worship, and the lyrics that gave them form.

We read that the Church was filled with joy and praised God. Incidentally, we learn that, despite sufferings from cruel scourging, Paul and Silas sang hymns in the Philippian prison, showing that with the new wine of Christian joy there were created new bottles to contain it. We may be sure this was not an isolated instance, but the occurrence of an established practice.

*Apostolic Emphasis of Sacred Song.* James says, "Is any merry, let him sing psalms." Whether he meant David's or "private" psalms is left open to conjecture. The American Revised Version translates it "praise." Paul is most definite in recognizing "hymns and spiritual songs" as distinguished from "psalms." Some commentators have interpreted the latter as David's psalms, the "hymns" as the already accepted canticles, and the "spiritual songs" as the new songs, more or less improvised, that were sung by individuals, "teaching and admonishing one another," "singing with grace in the heart."

Paul's conception of the hymn, therefore, was not a collective hymn, sung by all, but a hymn of edification sung by individual singers. The practice of solo singing assumed in Paul's exhortations in Ephesians and Colossians, due to the perennial danger of governmental raids and persecutions, still



continued in the time of Tertullian (circa 198). He writes that after their common meal "each man, according as he is able, is called on, out of the Holy Scriptures, or of his own mind, to sing publicly to God. Hence it is proved in what degree he hath drunken"—a refutation of the common charge of gluttony and drunkenness.

*Traces of Hymns in the Epistles.* In the eagerness to unearth traces of the supposed hymnody of the Apostolic church, the wish has been father to the thought, and passages have been pointed out as probable quotations from hymns current in the churches. Some of them are quite plausible, but others are examples of the periodic structure so manifest in the style of both Christ and Paul and in the Oriental proverbial form, but lacking the parallelism of the Psalms.

In Ephesians 5: 14, Paul has the formula of quotation from the Old Testament, but no such passage, or anything approaching it, can be found in either the canonical or uncanonical books of the Old Testament. If we should substitute "it" for "he," the second word of the passage "it" might refer to a hymn in common use. Westcott and Hort put it in metrical form, but the Revised Versions do not. It is very plausible, however; even in the English translation the structure is distinctly metrical:

"Awake, thou that sleepest,  
And arise from the dead,  
And Christ shall give thee light."

Equally plausible is the passage in I Timothy 3: 16, although not formally quoted:

"God was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the spirit,  
Seen of angels,  
Preached unto the Gentiles,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up into glory."

This is particularly true of such passages as have rhetorical warmth rather than inherent lyric quality. The extraordinary flight of the Spirit that has been called the "Hymn of Love" (1 Cor. 13) can be called a hymn only by stretching the limits of the definition beyond all reasonable bounds. Noble as it is, no composer has ever succeeded in setting it to worthy music. As well call Lincoln's Gettysburg address a Memorial Day Hymn. The same may be said of the ecstatic passage which opens Paul's letter to the Ephesians (1: 2-12).

*The Hymns of the Apocalypse.* It has been suggested that the choral passages of the Book of Revelation are quotations from current hymns. If that were true, how could the little gatherings of Christians have risen to the majesty of these marvelous hymns of adoration, either vocally or spiritually? They are so intimately a part of the stupendous scenes in which they appear as to make their being merely quotations seem impossible. Only the itch of a German-type scholarship to press out the last drop of possibility from any given historical material, and the calm assurance that the results must be true, since it has recognized them, can explain this hypothesis.

These hymns are too integral a part of the scenes, too consonant with their elevated spirit, and logically too inevitable, that they should have been mechanically introduced or even adapted from current hymns—they are too choral in the grand manner.

In general, we may accept the same judgment of Dr. Lyman Coleman, in his work *The Primitive Church*. "The argument is not conclusive, and all the learned criticism, the talent and the taste, that have been employed on this point, leave us little else than uncertain conjecture on which to build a hypothesis." "*The Odes of Solomon*." "The Odes of Solomon" is a Syriac collection of hymns which good authorities claim to be of the Apostolic Age; one authority, Mrs. Gibson, insists that it precedes Paul's letter to the Ephesians, while the most conserva-

tive concede that it belongs to the first century, or the first half of the second.

Its discoverer, Dr. Rendell Harris, Director of studies at Woodbrooke, the Quaker center at Selly Oak, England, says of the "Odes": "They are utterly radiant with faith and love, shot through and through with what the New Testament calls 'the joy of the Lord.'" He quotes one of them: "A great day has shined upon us; marvelous is He who has given us of His glory. Let us, therefore, all of us unite together in the name of the Lord, and let us honor Him in His goodness, and let us meditate in His love by night and by day."<sup>1</sup>

The first stanza of Ode XXVI is translated as follows:

I poured out praise to the Lord,  
 For I am his:  
 And I will speak his holy song,  
 For my heart is with him,  
 For his harp is in my hands,  
 And the odes of his rest shall not be silent.  
 I will cry unto him from my whole heart;  
 I will praise and exalt him with all my members.  
 For from the East and even to the West  
 Is his praise;  
 And from the South and even to the North  
 Is his confession:  
 And from the top of the hills to their utmost bound  
 Is his perfection.

*The Failure of Apostolic Spiritual Songs to Survive.* It is likely that the reason why no definitely recognized collection of hymns has survived from Apostolic times, and immediately thereafter, is that the singing, outside of the Psalms and Gospel canticles, was largely extemporaneous. The later hymnic form and structure had not yet developed. Dr. Neale, who deserves to be recognized as a high authority, referring to the apostolic "hymns" and "spiritual songs," says: "From the brief allusions we find to the subject in the New Testament

we should gather that the hymns and spiritual songs of the Apostles were written in metrical prose." Rhyming did not come into use until very much later. The singing was in recitative with rather formless melodies. Such extemporizations as appealed to the body of believers were passed on from place to place, the very best from generation to generation, from memory and by word of mouth, for illiteracy was the common lot of the mass of early believers. These people's spiritual songs were presently lost, much as were most of our early American "spirituals" that served so excellent a purpose.

Indeed, it would be entirely correct to conceive of the stream of devout song flowing steadily on from the "hymns and spiritual songs" of the Apostolic times down through the centuries until our own time, sometimes finding temporary subterranean channels, as with the Albigenses, the Hussites, and the Lollards, but always inspiring, refreshing, and comforting the generations as it passes. It was the *Laus Perennis*, the unfailing sacrifice of praise, that day and night rose without break or intermission to the ears of the Almighty. In every generation, hymns that had nobly served preceding generations were replaced by new ones fresh from throbbing hearts that had re-experienced the vital truths of Christianity.

It is no condemnation of a hymn that the Church lays it aside. That it served only for a season may have been due to its peculiar adaptation to the individuality of the age, to the temporary conditions and needs among God's saints of that particular time.

## ~~~~~Chapter VIII~~~~~

### THE POST-APOSTOLIC HYMN

*The Post-Apostolic Church a Singing Church.* Whatever conclusion we reach regarding the song service during the Apostolic age, because of the meager facts we have regarding it, we have sufficient information regarding the second, third, and fourth centuries to be sure that the hymn had become a more and more important feature of the religious life. The tide of song swells louder and higher as the generations pass. Clement of Alexandria, the reputed writer of the earliest surviving Christian hymn, "Shepherd of tender youth," writes, "We cultivate our fields, praising; we sail the sea, hymning." Jerome writes to Marcellus, "You could not go into the field, but you might hear the plowman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vinedresser singing David's psalms." Tertullian, a little earlier, when the antiphonal singing was still in vogue, objects to the marriage of a Christian with an unbeliever, because they cannot sing together, whereas the Christian mates each would challenge the other "which shall better chant to the Lord." The early church was, therefore, a singing church.

Tertullian was not a writer of hymns, for he declared "We have a plenty of verses, sentences, songs, proverbs." We do not have their hymns, but we have the names of prominent hymn writers who sealed their faith with their blood: Ignatius,

Athenogenes, Hippolytus, and many others who did not win a martyr's crown.

All these hymns blossomed out of the consuming love for the Lord Jesus Christ, for which the Jewish psalms could give no expression. That they were used for public worship we have the testimony of Pliny (A.D. 110). His report from Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan was that "the new sect have a custom of meeting before dawn on a stated day and singing by turn a hymn to Christ as God."

*The Earliest Surviving Hymns.* Unless we accept the Syriac "Odes of Solomon" as an apostolic hymnbook, none of the "spiritual songs" of that age survive. The hymn written (or quoted?) by Clement in 170 is accepted as the earliest hymn handed down to us, with the "Candlelight Hymn" as possibly contemporaneous.

Clement's hymn "Shepherd of tender youth" is found in most of our hymnals and is in actual use.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Henry M. Dexter's version, as generally used, is an attenuation suited to the taste of our day rather than a faithful reproduction of the original, which begins with a rather violent figure, "Curb for stubborn steed" (E. H. Plumptre).

The date of the "Candlelight Hymn" is very uncertain. It was so old in 370 that another St. Basil could throw no light on its origin: "It seemed fitting to our fathers not to receive the gift of light at eventide in silence, but on its appearing immediately to give thanks." The version by John Keble is still in use:

"Hail, glad'ning Light, of His pure glory poured  
Who is the immortal Father heavenly, blest,  
Holiest of holies, Jesus Christ, our Lord!  
Now we are come to the sun's hour of rest;  
The lights of evening round us shine;  
We hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit divine."

*The Relation of Hymns to Psalms and Canticles.* In the very nature of the case, these individual songs and hymns and

psalms had no authority back of them. They were the "spirituals," the Gospel songs of their day and generation. Most of them were improvisations for a single service—flying sparks from the anvil of the Spirit. Undoubtedly others had a longer life, were written out and passed from hand to hand and even from generation to generation.

These hymns were mostly in Greek, though some were in Syriac, and as far as they were given a standard form they used Greek classical meters. Some were modeled on the Septuagint psalms and were known as "private psalms." Many were odes, like the "Odes of Solomon."

But it is quite evident that this body of song was never regarded as on an equality with the Psalms of the Jewish church, or with the Canticles of the New Testament. These had the sanctions of the rapidly crystallizing canon of the New Testament, and the established canon of the Old, which gave an authority that was lacking in the current hymnody. The relation was even more pronounced than that in our own day between the body of hymns surviving through the generations recognized as "standard" and the current religious songs of the hour.

In addition to the Psalms taken over from the Jewish psalter (not over one-half of which were ever sung) and the Canticles of Luke's Gospel, there gradually rose a subsidiary body of canticles which by the fourth century had been for the most part fully formulated. They were developments of passages from both the Old and New Testament. In addition to the ejaculatory responses, "Alleluia" and "Hosanna," the following were hymns authorized to be used in Christian services:

1. The *Gloria in Excelsis*, developed from the song of the angels as found in Luke, known as the Greater Doxology.
2. The *Ter Sanctus*, based on Isaiah 6: 3, possibly later associated with Revelation 4: 8, and called the Cherubical Hymn.
3. The *Benedicite*, the song of the three Hebrew children

in the furnace, a paraphrase of the forty-eighth Psalm, likely taken from the Apocrypha.

4. The *Gloria Patri* or Lesser Doxology, apparently handed down from the Apostolic time, developed from the baptismal formula. It was expanded during the Arian controversy, adding "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."<sup>2</sup>

*The Hymn as Propaganda.* The inferiority of the popular hymnody became ever more pronounced as the hymn was employed by heretical sects as a means of propagating their pernicious doctrines. Bardesanes and his son Harmonius in Edessa, Asia, a little later composed an entire psalter of one hundred and fifty psalms, "deserting David's truth and preserving David's numbers," as Ephrem Syrus expressed it.

The Gnostic hymns during the third century were slowly undermining the faith of the people, but it was not until Arius appeared with his denial of the deity of Jesus Christ and spread broadcast his "Thalia," a collection of practical hymns emphasizing practical duties and the value of the daily life of the people, as well as magnifying the humanity of Jesus, that the full extent of the revolution in the religious sentiment of the people became evident. He fitted his measures to well-known popular tunes, sung only by those "who sing songs over their wine with noise and revel."

Arius, an ungainly giant of tremendous force of personality and unbounded energy, thus began a movement that was to convulse with its controversy the whole Roman Empire through many generations, even down to our own times, and was to prepare Asia and Northern Africa for the superimposition of the Mohammedan personality and cult upon an emasculated Christianity.

In 269, Paul of Samosata, an Arian Bishop, banished from his churches the hymns that had come down from the second century because they were addressed to Christ as God and "as being innovations, the work of men of later times." He



began the Arian fashion of propaganda by means of hymns. As an answer to this came the great hymnic outburst of the fourth century, headed by Gregory of Nazianzus and participated in by St. Chrysostom.<sup>3</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Synod that met in Laodicea in 363 ordered that "psalms composed by private men must not be read in the church, nor uncanonical books, but only the canonical of the New and Old Testament."

Nor need we wonder that with the Arian fanatics interrupting orthodox services by starting their heterodox hymns, the same Synod decided that "beside the psalm singers appointed thereto who mount the ambo and sing out of the book, no others shall sing in church."

This robbing the lips and the hearts of the congregation of its share of the public praise, in order to prevent Gnostic and Arian heretics from profaning public services with their strife and contention, hardened into a perpetual prohibition, and in the Greek church the people are mute to this day.<sup>4</sup>

It should be remembered that these prohibitions applied only to public services and their liturgies. Outside the walls of the larger churches the people were still singing. Indeed, the popular song was used by the orthodox to displace the heretical songs of the Arians, as was done by Chrysostom in Constantinople, in order to stem the tide of attack on the doctrine of the deity of Christ.

## *Chapter IX*

### THE GREEK HYMNODY

#### I. EARLY GREEK HYMNS

THE reaction of the Greek Church to the hymnic attack of Arians interests us because of its influence on the general development of the Christian hymn.

Of the earliest hymn writers we know little, and their work has not come down to us. We have a hymn of Methodius (311) based on the parable of the ten virgins, of considerable vigor and merit.

The most prominent figure that greets us is that of Gregory of Nazianzus (327-389). He was called to Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius to lead the orthodox forces against the Arian enemy. He was appointed court preacher, Patriarch of the Eastern Church, and president of the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople; but the pious, gentle monk, while a great preacher and a fertile hymn writer (it is said that he wrote thirty thousand hymns), was not fitted for the strife and intrigue rampant in the Capital; within a few years he returned to his cell at Nazianzus in Cappadocia. His hymns are ranked very high. Dr. Brownlee has given an excellent version of his "Evening Hymn":

"O word of truth! In devious paths  
My wayward feet have trod;  
I have not kept the day serene  
I gave at morn to God.

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And now 'tis night, and night within,  
O God, the light hath fled!  
I have not kept the vow I made  
When morn its glories shed.

For clouds of gloom from nether world  
Obscured my upward way;  
O Christ, the Light, thy light bestow,  
And turn my night to day!"

Synesius (375-430), Bishop of Cyrene, was a brilliant man, a friend of Hypatia, whom most general readers know as the heroine of Charles Kingsley's great historical romance. He wrote some very tender hymns and poems that have been widely appreciated. He is best known by his hymn, "Lord Jesus, think on me," a free paraphrase of which (by Allen W. Chatfield) is found in some of our hymnals.

Anatolius (d.458) is known to us, not as the able and noble Byzantine pontiff, but as the original writer of two quite different hymns, translated by Dr. Mason Neale: the evening hymn, "The day is past and over," and the descriptive hymn, "Fierce was the wild billow." He was one of the first to forsake the classical forms and to put his thoughts into harmonious prose. He wrote few hymns, but all of great excellence.

### II. THE LATER GREEK HYMNS

The earlier Greek hymn writers wrote in the classical measures and evinced an admirable sense of form; but the later hymnists, following the example of Anatolius, wrote in rhythmical prose and not by any means as felicitously. Moreover, the later Greek language greatly degenerated, losing its lucidity and subtlety of expression.<sup>1</sup>

The later Greek hymns had many ecclesiastical and theological phrases difficult to render. They were filled with grotesque figures; the worship of Mary, and even of the saints,

is offensive. Being mostly in rhythmical prose, they were not intended to be sung—at most only to be chanted. Really they were not hymns in the ordinary sense of the word; rather they were the raw materials of hymns. As Dr. Brownlie says, "The writers are not poets, in the true sense, and their language is not Greek as we have known it."

The more conspicuous of these later Greek devotional writers do not appear until the eighth century.

Andrew of Crete (660-732), an archbishop, was a very voluminous devotional writer. Among his more important works are the "Great Canon,"<sup>2</sup> the "Triodion," and the "Pentecostarion." The "Great Canon" has more than three hundred stanzas, illustrating by Scripture examples the feelings of a penitent confessing his sins. He is represented in some of our hymnals by the hymn, "Christian, dost thou see them?" translated by Dr. John Mason Neale and said to be taken from the "Great Canon."

The other hymnists of this century are John of Damascus (d.780), his foster-brother Cosmas, the Melodist (d.760), and Stephen the Sabaite, his nephew (725-794).

John of Damascus wrote the best Greek of his generation and was most poetical in spirit and style. Gibbon calls him the "last of the Greek Fathers." His verse is characterized by being written in iambics (the most common measure in modern hymns). His best-known hymn is "'Tis the day of resurrection," taken from his great Easter canon, styled the "Queen of Canons" and the "Golden Canon" by the Greek Church.

John's foster-brother, Cosmas, survives in the Christmas hymn, "Christ is born! exalt his name." Although his canons are very thoughtful, his style is often turgid and difficult to follow.

Stephen the Sabaite, the nephew of John of Damascus, the third of this "nest of singing birds" (to use Dr. Gillman's phrase), came to Mar Saba as a boy and remained there all his

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life. Dr. Neale found the inspiration of his hymn "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" in some lines of Stephen.

These three Greek hymn writers were monks in the monastery of San Saba, to be seen to the north from the highway between Jerusalem and Jericho, on the rugged heights overlooking the Jordan valley.

Another group of Greek hymn writers appears a little later, headed by Theodore (759-826), abbot of the Studium, a great monastery at Constantinople. The group was quite controversial, the occasion being not the Deity of Christ, but the enforced destruction of ikons, or images. The hymns of this group were not all controversial. Theoctistus (c.890), an obscure and later member of it, when the heat of strife had presumably subsided, could write this devout hymn of praise to Christ:

"Jesu, name all names above,  
Jesu, best and dearest.  
Jesu, fount of perfect love,  
Holiest, tend'rest, nearest.

Jesu, source of grace completest,  
Jesu purest, Jesu sweetest.  
Jesu, well of power divine,  
Make me, keep me, seal me thine."

Joseph of the Studium (c.840), because of his many hymns, was called the Hymnographer. He wrote too much to write well. His work is characterized as tautological, tawdry, tedious. Three of his hymns, however, had enough suggestiveness to inspire Dr. Neale to write "Let our choir new anthems raise," "O happy band of pilgrims," and "Safe home, safe home in port." Dr. Neale's pump seems to have needed but slight priming to bring up stirring lyrics from the deepest spiritual experiences and emotions!

The most striking characteristic of the Greek hymnody is its sheer objectivity. It is self-forgetful in its rapt, ecstatic con-

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templation of the doctrines and facts of the Christian faith. It is never experiential or self-analytical except when it confesses sin and unworthiness. The sustained dignity and elevation of its praise and adoration are other admirable traits. Its consciousness of God, its unflawed acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, its assurance of the indwelling Spirit, give it a liturgical value beyond that of any other ancient hymnody.

## *Chapter X*

### THE LATIN HYMNODY

#### I. THE BEGINNINGS OF LATIN HYMNODY

THE early disciples in the West were accustomed to use the Greek language, as may be gathered from Paul's writing his Epistle to the Romans in Greek. It is probable that their religious services were largely in that language until there were Romans enough added to the churches to make the use of Latin necessary.

That great ode, the "Te Deum," comes to us only in a Latin form. The tradition is that it was an antiphon improvised by Ambrose and Augustine on the occasion of the latter's baptism, but that is doubtless a hero-worshiping fancy of the ninth century. That a good deal of it came from the Greek was to be expected and is quite certain, whether the Dacian Bishop, Nicetius of Remisiana, gathered up the Greek material or not (circa 400).

On the other hand, there is no Greek version extant, except a much later one which is evidently a translation from the Latin.

It may have been written (or compiled) during the Arian controversy as a creedal song to be sung by clerical or monastic choirs. It may have grown by gradual accretion, from generation to generation, like the Easter hymn "Jesus Christ is risen today," which, begun in the fourteenth century, was not given final form until 1816.

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This magnificent ode, for it is a hymn only by a considerable extension of the definition, appears in our modern hymnals only as a chant, and is practically never sung in our non-liturgical congregations. It has been used as a choral text throughout all its history, never as a congregational hymn. It has had unnumbered settings by the greatest composers of Christendom.

It is the high festival ode of the ages, used in celebrating victories or other stately occasions of great public interest. Its comprehensiveness, nobility of thought, and elevated style befit the coronation of kings or the investiture of popes. For the mass of our churches, great as it is, it has only a historical interest. It might find impressive use as a responsive reading.

### II. EARLY LATIN HYMN WRITERS

Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (circa 300-367), "the hammer of the Arians," was exiled into Phrygia by Constantius because he called the Arian emperor "The Antichrist." In his exile he came in touch with the fierce propaganda waged on both sides by means of hymns. His controversial zeal recognized the opportunity, and he wrote a great many anti-Arian hymns, which he gathered on his return to France into his *Liber Mysteriorum*. That his book was lost was no great calamity, for his fiery, combative spirit, valuable enough at the time, had no message for future generations. He woke a new interest in singing and furnished a more practicable model. He undoubtedly suggested the antiphonal singing he found in the "Hinterland" of Asia Minor and thus prepared the way for his fellow-countryman, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. If the latter is recognized as the father of Latin hymnody, and even of all the Western hymnody, Catholic and Protestant, Hilary is its grandfather.

Ambrose (340-397) had been a lawyer, not a product of the ecclesiastical system, and he brought to his office a freshness of insight and of resources that might have been atrophied



in the mechanical clerical education of his day. The value of song in supporting the spirits of his followers when besieged for days in his cathedral suggested to his practical mind, stimulated by his musical nature, its wider use when the battle was won.

Ambrose broke new ground for Latin hymnody in several essential particulars. He transformed the merely reading hymn, confined to the clergy, to a singing hymn for the congregation, writing hymns for the express purpose of promoting congregational song. He passed by the artificial classical meters for the simplest of lyrical meters, four lines of four iambic measures each, which has come down to us through the centuries as Long Meter. He also introduced the free use of rhymes.

Ambrose was not only a learned man of great ability, but—what is more to our present purpose—a man of great piety and devotion. He sought to vitalize and actualize the devotions, personal and collective, of the Christian Church, to make them genuine and heartfelt as against the formalists to whom the mere letter is all-important. His hymns are evidences of his spirituality. There is room for stanzas from only a few of them:

“O splendor of the Father’s face,  
Affording light from light,  
Thou Light of light, thou fount of grace,  
Thou day of day most bright.

Thee, in the morn with songs of praise,  
Thee, in the evening time, we seek;  
Thee, through all ages, we adore,  
And suppliant of thy love we speak.”

In spite of the opposition of the Roman See, and the later effort of Charlemagne, in his zeal for the Gregorian system, to destroy all copies of the Ambrosian hymns and tunes, the “Ambrosiani” still keep a small place in the Roman Breviary.

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Among the contemporaries of Ambrose, no hymnist stands out more conspicuously than the Spaniard, Prudentius (348-424). He also had been a lawyer and a man of affairs. He had more literary gifts than Ambrose, and his poems show more personality, more charm, more unaffected sincerity. Bentley calls him "the Horace and Virgil of the Christians." A single stanza may illustrate his spirit and style:

"The bird, the messenger of day,  
Cries the approaching light;  
And thus doth Christ, who calleth us,  
Our minds to life excite."

Mention should be made of Fortunatus (530-609). He was, like the later Marot of psalm-version fame, "the fashionable poet of the day," a precursor of the troubadours. Later in life he became religious, a priest, an almoner of a monastery, and finally Bishop of Poitiers. He wrote a processional to be used at the reception of a piece of the true cross presented by Queen Rhadegunda. The hymn "Vexilla regis prodeunt" has come down the ages. Dr. Neale calls it "one of the grandest in the treasury of the Latin church." We make room for the first and last stanzas of Dr. Neale's translation:

"The royal banners forward go;  
The cross shines forth in mystic glow;  
Where he in flesh, our flesh who made,  
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

· · · · ·  
Hail, altar! Hail, O Victim! Thee  
Decks now thy passion's victory  
Where life for sinners death endured,  
And life, by death, for man procured."

The influence and power of the Roman hierarchy were steadily exercised against the use of hymns and in behalf of the sole use of Scripture psalms and canticles. It is a far cry from Gregory the Great to John Calvin and John Knox, demanding the sole use of canonical material in the services of

the church; and a like far cry from the Council of Toledo in Spain in 633, which made a strong plea for the use of hymns in the church's devotions, to Isaac Watts and his prefaces to his several collections of modified psalms and of hymns. It was only toward the end of the twelfth century that hymns of "human composure" were used in Roman churches, and then were sung by clerical choirs in the larger basilicas of the capital city. The people were still shut out from their use.

But the impulse to write devotional material for the church service persisted. The Venerable Bede (672-735), scholar, theologian, philosopher, historian, general encyclopedist, wrote both Latin and Anglo-Saxon hymns in his faraway monastery at Yarrow, England. Theodulph (d.821), Paulus Diaconus, Odo of Cluny, Cardinal Damiana, and other minor hymnists wrote hymns, some of which, transformed by skillful translators, have found use in our day.

Notker, called Balbulus (850-912), of St. Gall in Eastern Switzerland, became weary of the long-drawn-out notes of the cadences of the final syllable of the "Alleluia," which was prolonged to enable the deacon to ascend to the rood-loft to chant the Gospel. It was suggested that a text be supplied, a syllable for every note. At first these texts had no metrical form and were called Proses. Later they were given a definite form and were called sequences, because they followed the "Alleluia." These sequences continued to be written for over three centuries and were brought to technical perfection by Adam of St. Victor.

These sequences, however, were an evidence of the abiding urge for lyrical expression rather than a step in the progressive development of the Christian hymn.

### III. GREAT LATIN HYMNS

A more important figure in our study of Latin hymns is Rabanus Maurus (776-856), archbishop of Mainz, Germany, a great scholar, an influential teacher, a profound theologian, a

voluminous writer, as well as a great hymn writer. He had been a notable figure in German church history before hymnological investigators proved that he was the writer of the great hymn, "Veni, Creator Spiritus," the worthy successor of Fortunatus' "Vexilla regis prodeunt." Its authorship had been credited at different times to Ambrose, Gregory the Great, Charlemagne, and Notker Balbulus. It is the only metrical hymn officially recognized by the early English Church. It is sung at high ceremonies like the coronation of kings or the consecration of bishops. The accepted version is by Bishop Cosin. It appears in our leading hymnals.

The next bead in our rosary of great hymns is "Veni, Sancte Spiritus," by the helpless little paralytic and humpback, Hermannus Contractus (1013-1054). An excellent historian, a renowned philosopher and theologian, a mathematician of unusual attainments, in short a universal and encyclopedic scholar, his chief glory now is that he wrote this hymn which Archbishop Trench rated "as the loveliest of all the hymns in the whole cycle of Latin sacred poetry." There is space for one stanza only, the third of this great hymn:

"O most blessed Light divine,  
Shine within these hearts of thine,  
And our inmost being fill;  
Where thou art not, man hath naught,  
Nothing good in deed or thought,  
Nothing free from taint of ill."

The tide of the years had been flowing quietly with only here and there rapids or an eddy, but now the current was hastening toward the great whirlpool of the Crusades. Hildebert, Peter the Hermit, Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard, Peter the Venerable, Adam of St. Victor, stand out as lighthouses on an uncharted sea.

Not the least of these was Bernard, the abbot of Clairvaux (1091-1153), scholar, orator, statesman, and man of affairs, of whom Archbishop Trent declares: "Probably no man during

his lifetime ever exercised a personal influence in Christendom equal to his; the stayer of popular commotions, the queller of heresies, the umpire between princes and kings, the counsellor of popes." This does not suggest the writer of such a hymn as "*Jesu dulcis memoria*,"<sup>1</sup> the tenderest, sweetest sacred lyric of the Middle Ages. But he was credited with it for centuries until it was found in a manuscript of the eleventh century and there credited to a Spanish Benedictine abbess, an origin more consonant with its spirit and with its finished Latinity. Would we knew more about her, this medieval precursor of Anne Steele, Sarah F. Adams, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth P. Prentiss, and Fanny Crosby! Dr. S. W. Duffield holds "Bernard to be the real author of the modern hymn—the hymn of faith and worship"; but now the iconoclastic modern hymnologist denies him even the authorship of the "*Salve Caput Cruentatum*."<sup>2</sup>

We know very little about the other Bernard, who was a monk in the greater abbacy of Cluny; but his authorship of the great indictment of the Roman church of his time, "*De Contemptu Mundi*," is undoubted. His great poem of three thousand lines<sup>3</sup> occupied itself with the vice and moral filth which his pure soul detested. In his disgust with the moral ordure in which his feet were immersed, he suddenly takes wing and rises to the heights to contemplate "the Heavenly Land." Dr. Neale, out of scattered lines and phrases of the original, with additions of his own, constructed the wondrous mosaics which we delight to sing: "Brief life is here our portion," "Jerusalem, the Golden," "For thee, O dear, dear country."

One thinks of Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) as the Aristotelian logician, the profound Augustinian theologian, the philosopher, the invincible protagonist of medieval orthodoxy, rather than as a hymn writer; yet some of our present-day hymnals contain two communion hymns of profound thought and deep feeling written by him. "*Pange, lingua, glorioso*" is

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perhaps the finer; here is one stanza of Edward Caswell's version:

"Now, my tongue, the mystery telling  
Of the glorious body sing,  
And the blood, all price excelling  
Which the Gentile's Lord and King  
Once on earth amongst us dwelling  
Shed for this world's ransoming."

The other, "Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem," has been rendered by Alexander R. Thompson, as follows:

"Zion, to thy Saviour singing,  
To thy Prince and Shepherd bringing  
Sweetest hymns of love and praise,  
Thou wilt never reach the measure  
Of thy most ecstatic lays."

### IV. MEDIEVAL DEVOTIONAL POEMS

We now reach the consideration of hymns and poems of great excellence in themselves but without the appeal, or practicability as hymns, possessed by the foregoing. Some of them appear in liturgical hymnals, or in more formal hymnals of non-liturgical churches, but their use is limited.

Among these is Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Sun,"<sup>4</sup> not a hymn, but a psalm of praise for all created things. For our day it has chiefly literary and antiquarian interest.

His follower and biographer, Thomas of Celano (?-1255), however, wrote a sequence or hymn that has intrigued the interest of generation after generation. Mozart's "Requiem" uses parts of it as its text. Goethe introduces it in his "Faust." Unnumbered translations of it have been made into all civilized languages. Theodore Parker called it the "damnation lyric." In the original "Dies irae" there were eighteen stanzas. The version of W. J. Irons has fourteen stanzas of three lines each, a few of which follow:

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"Day of Wrath! O day of mourning!  
See fulfilled the prophets' warning,  
Heaven and earth in ashes burning!

Oh, what fear man's bosom rendeth,  
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,  
On whose sentence all dependeth."

Sir Walter Scott's version is in four-line stanzas, three of which are used to make a practicable hymn. But who in our self-complacent age cares to sing any of these versions, portraying "The Last Judgment"?

Another famous hymn, written by a follower of Francis of Assisi, perhaps Jacopone da Todi, "the fool for Christ's sake," is the "Stabat Mater Dolorosa." It celebrates the sufferings, not of Christ on the cross, but of Mary, his mother, standing at its foot. It is the supreme Mariolatrous hymn in sentiment and in diction. It is Roman, of course, not Catholic, and interests us only as marking the sincerity and the depth of the medieval sentiment and devotion to the Madonna.

This great hymn is noteworthy because of the many translations into modern languages which have been made, seventy-eight into German alone and as many more into English, in whole or in part. Its emotional possibilities have appealed to many music composers, including Palestrina, Pergolesi, Haydn, Rossini, and Dvorak—settings varied in style from Palestrina's high dignity to Rossini's almost theatrical treatment.

It must be remembered that the Greek hymns of the Eastern church, and the Latin hymns of the Western, were not in dead languages, as they appear to us, but in living languages, the vernacular of the persons producing and using them. While the common people may have spoken a different dialect, the monks and clergy used the classic speech as a very mother tongue. The hymns were for the most part a perfectly spontaneous expression of religious conviction and feeling, a

living product of vital experience, an instinctive expression of profound faith.

In closing this rapid survey of a thousand years of Greek and Latin hymns, one is impressed that they are all clerical—even monastic—in type and character. There are in many of them spontaneity, genuine feeling, and personal experience, a profound sense of spiritual realities; yet over all of them falls the shadow of the tonsured ecclesiastic, with his heart set on the impressiveness of the forms of worship rather than on the ultimate result in creating spiritual reactions in the individuals of the congregation.

#### V. MEDIEVAL POPULAR HYMNODY

Although the hymns whose origin we have been tracing were used in enriching the services of the Roman Church, and for guiding the meditations and devotions of the clerical spiritually-minded readers, we get hints of a people's hymnody used privately and in public processions, usually in the common speech of the region. It was the age of the Troubadours, a time of universal song. It is unthinkable that a people in whose lives religion was a commanding influence should have no songs of their own about it.

But among the Albigenses and Waldenses and other pietistic sects in remoter regions there must have been a hymnody all their own. They had no clergy, no connection with the Romish Church—were in utter opposition to its forms and organization. Hence their natural impulse for worship and praise compelled the creation of hymns of their own. They were spontaneous utterances expressing their spiritual life in a native vocabulary all could understand and appropriate.

Although this people's hymnody has perished, because it was produced and used by the populace and contemptuously ignored or denounced by the clerical custodians of the literature of their day, or by those of succeeding generations, the hymns were widely sung in the homes, on the streets, at popu-



lar religious festivals, and even in the remoter village churches where the clerical choirs were wanting.

It was these popular religious songs, rather than the more stately hymns read and chanted by clerical and monastic choirs, that kept alive the vital spark of religious feeling and devotion to Christ. If most of the doves of song hovered over the head of the Madonna during this long period, it was because she was the mother of Jesus. It was as the representative of all motherhood that she brought home the true manhood of our Lord.

That this popular hymnody of the medieval period has failed to survive is no proof of its worthlessness. It is no condemnation of the sermons of Chrysostom, of Peter the Hermit, of Martin Luther, or of a thousand sermons preached every Sunday that they perish with the breath that gave them utterance. They served a good purpose in their brief hour. That hundreds of Watts' hymns, and thousands by Charles Wesley, are no longer sung, does not establish their uselessness, but only that their spiritual as well as verbal idiom is not adapted to the needs of our day.

## ~~~~~Chapter XI~~~~~

### LUTHER AND THE GERMAN HYMN

#### I. PRE-REFORMATION VERNACULAR HYMNS

WHILE there has been a traceable logical progress in the development of the Christian hymn, as in that of material creation, the generative relations are not always clear. The link between Greek and Latin hymnody may be found in Hilary of Poitiers in the fourth century, but thereafter for five centuries they developed side by side along independent lines.

The same may be said regarding the Latin and German hymns, Luther furnishing the connection. But his connection is not so apparent with the clerical Latin hymn as with the general impulse toward the vernacular hymn.

Luther did not directly build upon the Latin hymns, although he did translate a few of them, but on the popular songs and hymns that were current in his day. Since the eleventh century vernacular hymns and religious songs had been in private use. The Gregorian rule that Scripture psalms and canticles only should be sung in public services had been strictly enforced in the monasteries and larger centers; but even there the proses and sequences had been allowed—in Latin, of course. The first hymns sung in the common speech were enlargements of the short responses allowed the people, “Kyrie eleison” and “Christe eleison” being surviving Greek phrases which were used as refrains to the stanzas of the

hymns. They were called "Leisen," or "Leichen." Our English word "lay" is a derivative from the same source. Many of these "Leisen" mingled German and Latin words.

Back of the wrong conception of the way of salvation and the fanaticism expressed in self-torture, the Flagellant Monks of the later medieval period had an intensity of conviction and a selfless devotion that inevitably found expression in song. Bands of them made pilgrimages through Christian lands in processions, singing hymns to Mary and her Son in the common speech, little recking that they were helping to fertilize the soil from which should spring the Great Reformation.

When King Conrad was anointed in 1024, our information is that "joyfully they marched, the clergy singing in Latin, the people in German, each after his own fashion"; but this was not a church service; it was a festival procession.

Vernacular hymns became more and more numerous during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The troubadours and minnesingers could not but stimulate their production, furnishing the metrical and rhythmical models and no small part of the hymns themselves, especially those glorifying the divine motherhood of Mary. The monks, the custodians of the literary and scholarly product of this age, had no motive for making a record of these hymns, much less of their tunes, for which, indeed, no adequate system of notation existed; hence but little of this popular hymnody survives. It was not until Gutenberg brought in the age of printing that some of it was handed down to us.<sup>1</sup>

The great mystic, John Tauler (1290-1361), a Dominican monk of Strassburg, and others, wrote hymns of profound personal religious experience that were widely sung. John Huss of Prague (1369-1415), the renowned Bohemian martyr, wrote hymns in both Czech and Latin. In 1501 and 1505 Czech hymnbooks were issued, the first congregational hymnbooks in the vernacular, the latter containing no less than

four hundred hymns, while Luther's first collection, in 1524, nineteen years later, contained only eight.

It will be seen that the foundations of vernacular singing by the people, with popular tunes, had been laid, deep and wide, foundations on which Luther could later build his German hymnody. In almost every particular he had been anticipated by the Bohemian reformers, in vernacular hymns and psalms, in the use of the people's tunes, in the revision of hymns current among the Catholics—by discarding their worship of Mary and the saints—in the emphasis placed on music as a vehicle for conveying Gospel truths and for the intensifying of the needed propaganda.

In France, in England and Scotland, in the Netherlands, the same impulses were felt. The fullness of the times had been prepared, and the great protagonist and organizer of the spiritual revolt against the hierarchy of Rome made of the hymn, which the ecclesiastical builders had rejected, one of the cornerstones of the new Church.

## II. LUTHER'S RELATION TO GERMAN HYMNODY

Luther's objective in regard to the hymn was entirely different from that of these representatives of traditional worship. He did not have in mind the perfecting of a liturgical service on the lines of ecclesiastical tradition, but the spiritual edification of the mass of the people whom the liturgic monks had been ignoring. While too appreciative of the Latin liturgy to cast aside psalms and canticles, as well as sequences, he rejected them as models for his hymns, and his creative impulse made the more appealing and practical folk songs his basis of form and spirit.

Luther was a great lover of poetry and music. In his youth he went about singing in the streets and in private homes. He knew both the popular and the churchly music and was well prepared for his future post of liaison officer between the Latin and the coming German hymnody.

His great work in hymnody is that he took both the psalm and the hymn from the clergy, put them into the vernacular in metrical form, with popular tunes, and restored them to the people. He added to the function of the hymn as worship those of instruction, meditation, and exhortation. He added an entirely new dimension to the value of the hymn, making it a means of creating a religious atmosphere for the whole life of the Christian—personal, family, community. He made the German people a singing people and laid the foundations for their later musical pre-eminence. As Dr. Benson says, "He took it [the hymn] out of the liturgies and put it into the people's hearts and homes. He revived, that is to say, Paul's conception of hymnody as a spiritual function."<sup>2</sup>

Luther's hymns are the root out of which grew all our Protestant hymnody. They are like Ambrose's in their plainness but, owing to their popular models, are superior in their metrical variety and in their cheerfulness. They are purposely cheerful: "When we sing, both heart and mind should be cheerful and merry." They had also a more definite evangelical content, both objective and subjective, more personal experience, more exhortation, thus immensely widening the horizon of the hymn. Much of this was doubtless due to the Hussite influence.

Luther anticipated Isaac Watts in demanding that the psalm should be transformed into a hymn, retaining its important subject matter, but excluding "certain forms of expression and employing other suitable ones."

The most important characteristic of the hymns of Luther and his associates was the burden of biblical truth. "What I wish is to make German hymns for this people, that the Word of God may dwell in their hearts by means of song also," gives us his ideal and his practical purpose.

Luther's hymns bear the characteristics of their writer. They were straightforward, clear, and unpretentious, full of force and strong of conviction. He was no poet. He was not con-

scious of literary impulses. His diction often is more forcible than elegant. Indeed, he was a peasant within whose horizon the elegant did not appear. Dr. Philip Schaff says of him: "He had an extraordinary faculty of expressing profound thought in the clearest language. In this gift he is not surpassed by any uninspired writer; and herein lies the secret of his power. . . . His style is racy, forcible, and idiomatic."

Lord Selborne, an English hymnologist, remarks on Luther's hymns, "Homely and sometimes rugged in form, and for the most part objective in tone, they are full of fire, manly simplicity, and strong faith."

Luther wrote thirty-eight hymns. Twelve of them were based on Latin hymns, among others, "Veni, Redemptor gentium," "Veni, Creator Spiritus," "O Lux beata Trinitas," and "Te Deum Laudamus"; four were rewritten pre-Reformation hymns; seven were versions of Latin psalms; six were paraphrases of other portions of Scripture, such as the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer; nine were original hymns.

Nine collections were issued by Luther, beginning with the "Achtlieder Buch," the first evangelical hymnbook in the German language, issued in 1524. It contained but eight hymns, four by Luther, three by Paul Speratus, court chaplain at Koenigsberg, and one of unknown authorship. Later in the year it was increased to twenty-five hymns, bringing fourteen new hymns by Luther; it was called the "Erfurt Enchiridion." During this year, 1524, he wrote twenty-one of his thirty-eight hymns. Five years later, 1529, he issued another hymnbook containing fifty-four hymns. The issue of 1553, seven years after his death, contained one hundred and thirty-one hymns. Three of these nine issues had prefaces, as noteworthy as those of Watts to his several books of psalms and hymns in formulating the principles of the new Christian hymnody.

Luther's masterpiece, "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott" ("A

mighty fortress is our God"), is based on the forty-sixth Psalm. It is one of the greatest hymns in the whole Christian hymnody, great in itself, great in its influence on the Protestantism of northern Europe. Ranke, the noted church historian, says: "It is the production of the moment in which Luther, engaged in a conflict with a world of foes, sought strength in a consciousness that he was defending a divine cause, which could never perish." Carlyle recognized its majesty, "a sound of Alpine avalanches, or the first murmurs of earthquakes." Calling up the inspiration it brought to the Protestant armies, German and Swedish, in the religious wars after the Reformation, Heine characterized it as "the Mar-seillaise of the Reformation." It has been recognized as the national hymn of Protestant Germany.

A number of translations into English have been made. Carlyle successfully reproduces its rugged strength in his version, but for congregational use the translation of Rev. Frederick H. Hedge, made in 1853, is more practicable.

Luther's tune is worthy of the text in its ponderous majesty. A small congregation, or a larger one that does not know it very well, can do little with it; only a large congregation singing lustily and in the characteristically German slow tempo can do it justice.

His Christmas hymn, "Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her" ("From heaven above to earth I come"), his praise of Jesus Christ, "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ" ("All praise to Thee, eternal Lord"), a revision of a pre-Reformation popular hymn, and his doctrinal hymn, rejoicing over the salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, "Nun freuet euch, lieb' Christen G'mein" ("Dear Christian people, now rejoice"), have been very much beloved and were very effective in building up the Protestant cause.

Luther deserves well of the Christian Church, not only because of his own hymns, but because of the inspiration he afforded others among his contemporaries, and to the gen-

erations since his day, to take up the writing of hymns. Among the co-laborers in this field in his own generation were Justus Jonas, Paul Eber, Erasmus Alber, Lazarus Spengler, Paul Speratus, and Nicolaus Decius. Luther furnished the idea, the inspiration, and the model for all these hymnists. According to Koch, fifty-one writers contributed hymns to swell the Lutheran hymnody between 1517 and 1560.

As was to be expected, the early German hymnody was also enriched by a number of excellent hymns from the Bohemian Brethren. They were translated by Michael Weiss and Johann Roh, German ministers who had been associated with them.

No small part of the immediate success of Luther's hymns was the tunes which he provided. He used the melodies already current among the people. He had providentially associated with him musical helpers like Johann Walther and Ludwig Senfl, who did the musical editorial work on his issues. His settings of his "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" and "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ" are still a valuable part of the melodic treasury of the Christian Church.



## ~~~~~Chapter XII~~~~~

### THE LATER GERMAN HYMNODY

#### I. THE RISING STANDARD OF LITERARY VALUES

AFTER Luther's death, the impetus of his hymnic influence gradually lost its evangelical force, and a more self-consciously literary coterie raised both the literary and musical standards. Prominent among them was Bartolomaeus Ringwaldt (1530-1598), who wrote "Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit"—the German "Dies Irae"—which probably suggested the English hymn, "Great God! what do I see and hear?" He was a very fertile writer. Equally fertile was Nicolaus Selnecker (1530-1592), who wrote nearly one hundred and fifty hymns.

More important than either was Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608), a Westphalian pastor, whose "Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern" ("O Morning Star, how fair and bright") and "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" ("Sleepers, wake, a voice is calling") have been and are the most widely used of all German hymns outside of Luther's two masterpieces. Nicolai wrote them while a great pestilence was raging in Unna, during which fourteen hundred persons perished. He wrote the hymns for his own comfort and that of his people. He also wrote the chorales to which they are sung and which have been called respectively the "Queen" and "King" of German chorales. On the basis of their intrinsic value rather than on that of adaptation to American spirit and type of church life, they occasionally appear in our hymnals, but they are rarely

or never sung. Miss Winkworth's translation of the "King" may be judged by the first stanza:

"Wake, awake, the night is flying;  
The watchmen on the heights are crying,  
Awake, Jerusalem, at last!  
Midnight hears the welcome voices,  
And at the thrilling cry rejoices;  
Come forth, ye virgins, night is past!  
The Bridegroom comes, awake,  
Your lamps with gladness take;  
Alleluia!  
And for his marriage-feast prepare,  
For ye must go to meet him there."

This chorale was used by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy as one of the climaxes of his great oratorio, "St. Paul."

The popular "Te Deum" of Germany, "Nun danket alle Gott" ("Now thank we all our God"), was written by Martin Rinkart (1586-1649). Miss Winkworth's version is found in most modern hymnals and deserves wide use, for it is entirely practicable in a congregation of average size. Mendelssohn used this chorale in his cantata "Lobgesang" with much effectiveness. This great hymn was written at the conclusion of the horrible and disastrous Thirty Years' War. Michael Altenburg (1584-1640) wrote the famous battle hymn of Gustavus Adolphus with which the great Warrior King has been credited; "Verzage nicht, du Haeuflein klein" (Fear not, O little flock, the foe") is still used in Germany. However, Luther's "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott" was the more usual battle hymn, as Altenburg's hymn was not introduced until late in Gustavus Adolphus' campaigns—indeed, has been called his "Swan song." Martin Opitz (1597-1639) deserves mention as a valuable influence in regulating the meters and in stressing poetical values. One of the immortal hymns written during this period was that of Georg Neumark (1621-1681), librarian of the Duke of Weimar, "Wer nur den

lieben Gott laesst walten" ("If thou but suffer God to guide thee"). Other hymn writers during this distressful period were Johann Heermann (1585-1647), who wrote distinctive hymns of prayer in a correct style and good versification; Johann Rest (1607-1667), who wrote six hundred and eighty hymns intended to cover the whole domain of theology (two hundred of which were in common use in the German churches); and Matthaeus Apelles von Loewenstein (1594-1648), Johannes Matthaeus Meyfart (1590-1642), and Paul Fleming (1609-1640).

This was a period of tribulation, calamity, and desperation, which, as Miss Winkworth remarks, "caused religious men to look away from this world" and led to a more subjective type of hymn, expressing personal feeling. In general, the literary value of the hymns of this period, in form and diction and imagination, exceeded that of those of the previous generation.

## II. THE GOLDEN AGE OF GERMAN HYMNODY

The spiritual deepening of this age of sorrow, the widening of the scope of the hymn by the inclusion of more subjective elements, and the literary advance in the structure and diction were preparing the way for the Golden Age of German hymnody which followed the conclusion of the great religious war. It extended from Paul Gerhardt (1604-1676) to Christian Fuerchtegott Gellert (1715-1769).

Gerhardt had spent his young manhood amid the desolation and difficulties of the Thirty Years' War. He did not enter the ministry until he was nearly fifty years old, having written no hymns up to that time. A great preacher and a devoted pastor, he was a man of deep piety and of unflinching loyalty to the truth, as it was given to him to see it. As calamity followed calamity, under strict divine discipline in preparation for his great work in the writing of hymns, not only for the German church, but also for the whole Christian world, he united in himself the two tendencies, the one of viewing God

and divine things in an objective way, characteristic of the early Lutheran hymns, and the other, the expression of the emotion produced by such contemplation in the heart of the Christian, characteristic of the subsequent period. He had the body of the older hymnody and the spirit of the new.

Moreover, Gerhardt was a poet. Indeed, his writings were extensive lyrics rather than hymns. Some of them have furnished several hymns. He was the Keble of German hymnody, and his influence upon subsequent hymn writing has been most helpful. There is a poetic fertility in the man lacking in his predecessors.

He wrote one hundred and twenty-three hymns, of which Dr. Philip Schaff declares that they "are among the noblest pearls in the treasury of sacred poetry." They are of such uniform excellence that it is difficult to select those of outstanding merit. "Befiehl du deine Wege" ("Give to the winds thy fears") was translated by John Wesley. "O Jesu Christ, mein schoenstes Licht" ("Jesus, thy boundless love to me") is another most successful translation by the same hand. "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" ("O sacred head, now wounded") leans hard on "Salve, caput cruentatum," but has a spirituality the older hymn does not so fully display. Thirty of his hymns are in general use in the German churches, and Germany recognizes him as her prince of hymnists, superior even to Luther.

Gerhardt's contemporaries, John Franck (1618-1677) and John Scheffler (1624-1677), while fairly prominent do not compare with him in thoughtfulness and literary felicity. Both are more pietistic. The latter has a somewhat exuberant style, intense and enthusiastic. John Wesley translated and adopted one hymn known to our hymnals as "Thee will I love, my strength, my tower."

### III. THE PIETISTIC HYMN WRITERS

In the latter decades of the seventeenth century, Philipp

Jacob Spener, August Hermann Francke, and Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen led a strong movement of protest, called Pietism, against the arid scholasticism and cold formalism of the Lutheran church. It was a second Reformation, emphasizing piety and sincere emotionalism. It postponed the blight of Rationalism for a few decades and led a generation into a devouter, more genuine, religious life.

Spener was a great leader and a good man, but no hymn writer; Francke wrote but few hymns, and so this phase of their work devolved on Freylinghausen. He was full of spirit, with attractive rhythms and florid music. His songs were very popular, but lacked permanent merit. Other writers of this school were Schade, Schutz, and Rodigast.

Less immediately connected with the Pietistic movement, but under its influence, are Hiller of South Germany, Arnold, a professor at the University of Giessen, and Tersteegen of Westphalia, a mystic, all of whom wrote very acceptable hymns. Tersteegen was highly appreciated by John Wesley, who translated his "Gott rufet noch; sollt' ich nicht endlich hoeren?" ("God calling yet! shall I not hear?"). "Gott ist gegenwaertig! lasset uns anbeten" ("Lo! God is here; let us adore") and "Jedes Herz will etwas lieben" ("Something every heart is loving") are others found translated in current hymnals. Lord Selborne speaks of him as "of all the more copious German hymn writers after Luther, perhaps the most remarkable man, pietist, mystic, and missionary, he was also a great religious poet." That he was a layman makes his religious life all the more remarkable.

A more widely known and striking personality was Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), a very devout but somewhat erratic man. He became the patron saint of the Moravian church and shared—perhaps created—its zeal for foreign missions. He spent some time in the United States, in eastern Pennsylvania, and in the West Indies, doing evangelistic work. He wrote two thousand religious lyrics, disfigured to a

large extent by extravagances and by repulsive materialistic similes and phrases. His associate and successor, Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg, long resident in America, and Bishop Christian Gregor also wrote very useful hymns. The Moravian hymnody is all the more noteworthy in that it had a great influence over the hymnic work of the Wesleys.

#### IV. GERMAN REFORMED HYMNODY

The Reformed Church in Germany long followed Calvin in exclusively using the Psalms of David, but finally felt the impulse of the Lutheran hymnody. Tersteegen, mentioned above, leaned to this branch of the German church, although not officially connected with it. Joachim Neander (1650-1680), a Reformed minister at Bremen, wrote some extremely valuable and popular hymns of praise and was called the Psalmist of the New Covenant. Among his best are "Sieh, hier bin ich, Ehren-Koenig" ("Behold me here in grief draw near"), "Lobe den Herren, den maechtigen Koenig der Ehren" ("Praise to the Lord! He is King over all the creation"), "Unser Herrscher, unser Koenig" ("Sovereign Ruler, King victorious"), still sung in every pious home in Germany.

#### V. TRANSITION TO RATIONALISTIC HYMNS

The transitional personality between this Pietistic and the succeeding Rationalistic era, was Christian F. Gellert (1715-1769), a professor in Leipzig University. He was a man of sincere piety; he was a teacher, not only in the classroom, but in all his literary efforts. He wrote moral *Tales and Fables*, *Moral Poems*, *Didactic Poems*, as well as *Sacred Odes and Hymns*. There were fifty-four of these, all in the same didactic style. They lacked the rugged strength of Luther, the poetical element of Gerhardt, and the mystic insight of Tersteegen; but this very matter-of-factness made his writings immensely popular. Of all his hymns, but one survives in our modern hymnals, his Easter hymn, "Jesus lebt, mit ihm auch ich" ("Jesus lives, no longer now").

VI. RATIONALISM IN HYMNODY

German hymnody suddenly fell from its exalted Pietistic rhapsodies into a crass materialism. Dr. Philip Schaff gives a vivid glimpse into the situation: "He (Klopstock) was followed by a swarm of hymnological tinkers and poetasters who had no sympathy with the theology and poetry of the grand old hymns of faith; weakened, diluted, mutilated, and watered them, and introduced these misimprovements into the churches. . . . Conversion and sanctification were changed into self-improvement, piety into virtue, heaven into the better world, Christ into Christianity, God into Providence, Providence into fate. The people were compelled to sing rhymed sermons on the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the delights of reunion, the dignity of man, the duty of self-improvement, the nurture of the body, and the care of animals and flowers."

There is no poetical, much less religious, lyrical impulse in rationalism, and the church lyrics of this period have left little impress on the hymnody of the Christian Church. It was the classic period of German literature, but it had few Christian elements in it. Athens and Rome, not Jerusalem, were the centers of intellectual interest; and it might almost be said that it is a pagan literature.

VII. HYMNS OF RENEWED RELIGIOUS LIFE

As in the immediate pre-Reformation age, in spite of the decadence of religious life among the Roman Catholic leaders, there was a semi-submerged piety that forced the Reformation inside the church; so in this recrudescence of paganism in the German church, there was a great body of earnest, pious Christians who kept the spirit of true German devoutness alive.

These were represented by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803), who, although he set the disastrous fashion of rewriting the older hymns in order to improve their literary

value by removing archaisms and harsh lines, was yet a devout man, writing the great German epic "Messias" and also some deeply religious hymns that were too poetic for the common people. Another devout writer was Johann Kasper Lavater (1741-1801), better known by his treatise on physiognomy, who wrote some hymns after the style of Klopstock, but with greater popular success, for his "O suessester der Namen all" ("O name than every name more dear") has been translated and used in English hymnals.

When the first intoxication of the new freedom from churchly, and even moral, restraint passed away, the German church again found able representatives to give expression to its religious life. Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801), also called "Novalis," a mining engineer of fine literary ability, wrote some hymns of deep feeling and beautiful style. Friedrich de la Motte Fouque (1777-1843), chiefly known as the author of *Undine*, and as an outstanding representative of the Romantic school in literature, wrote some very beautiful hymns, including two missionary hymns of great excellence. There is a literary and imaginative charm in these hymns, as in his general German style, that betrays his Huguenot heredity. Both these writers had the literary emphasis that somewhat discounted the value of their hymns for the common people. They stand, however, as landmarks of the subsidence of the rationalistic period in German hymnody.

#### VIII. HYMNS OF PIETISTIC TYPE

In the reaction from Rationalism, Pietism again came into its own and a noble roster of sacred lyrists have given it expression. This includes Ernst Moritz Arndt, professor of history at the University of Bonn, whose "Wahres Christentum" was as necessary to every Christian home as the Bible itself, a patriot who won the hatred and persecution of Napoleon Bonaparte by his patriotic songs, and whose hymns are no small part of the treasury of later German hymnody. Among



them are "Ich weiss, an wen ich glaube" ("I know in whom I put my trust"), which is one of the German classics.

Friedrich Adolf Krummacher (1767-1845) is best remembered by his hymn "Mag auch die Liebe weinen" ("Though love may weep with breaking heart") and his missionary hymn, "Eine Herde und ein Hirt" ("One shepherd and one fold to be"). Still others are Friedrich Ruckert (1789-1866) whom Dr. Schaff calls "one of the greatest masters of lyric poetry," Albert Knapp (1798-1864), editor of the outstanding critical collection of German hymns, "Der Liederschatz," and writer of many widely used hymns, and Meta Heusser-Schweizer (1797-1876), of Switzerland, "the most eminent and noble among all the female poets of our whole evangelical Church."<sup>1</sup>

The primate of them all is Karl Johann Philipp Spitta (1801-1859), "the most popular hymnist of the nineteenth century." The fifty-fifth edition of his *Psalter und Harfe* appeared in 1889. He was an Hanoverian pastor. He had been under rationalistic teachers at the University of Goettingen, but toward the end of his university course had a profound religious experience that affected all his future life; he wrote no secular verse after that time. He was recognized as a mystic and pietist and his promotion was antagonized on that ground.

Many of his hymns have been translated into English. Among the most successful are "O Jesu, meine Sonne" ("I know no life divided"), "Es kennt der Herr die Seinen" ("He knoweth all His people"), "O selig Haus, wo man dich aufgenommen" ("O happy home, where thou art loved the dearest"), "O treuer Heiland, Jesu Christ" ("We praise and bless thee, gracious Lord").

Spitta may be called "the Gerhardt of the nineteenth century," for he has many of that great hymn writer's qualities as well as his popularity. He was sincerely devout, a man of an abiding sense of God's care and nearness; his style is smooth and melodious as well as poetical.

Spitta's hymns are very practical in length and form of stanza, and his themes grow out of the common needs and experiences of general humanity. For this reason they have been very largely translated into English—no less than thirty-three of them—and, what is more significant, selected by editors of hymnals, especially in England.

Karl von Gerok (1815-?) is another exceedingly popular religious lyricist of the nineteenth century, hardly second to Spitta. His "*Palm-blaetter*," issued in 1857, reached its fifty-sixth edition in 1886. By this time it has likely reached the century mark. But his verses are religious poetry, not hymns, and but a few centos have been admitted to German hymn-books.

Recently the new rationalism and sensual materialism have again submerged the religious life of Germany and the impulse to write hymns has lost its urgency. Whether the shattering of the illusion of world-wide power, and the sobering effect of its terrible losses of men and of wealth, will bring Germany back to her religious senses must be patiently awaited by those eager for her highest welfare. The recrudescence of paganism and its threat of renewed striving after world dominance need not blast this pious hope. God's hand is still on the tiller of the German national bark, and the heart of the German people is not represented by the bulletins on the surface of its current events, caused by the pride of nationalism in the shallow vocal stratum that stridently claims the world's attention.

In this hurried review of the development of the German hymn from Luther to Spitta much that is interesting and profitable has been omitted. But it is manifest that this German hymnody holds the supreme place in the hymnody of the Christian Church in all ages and nations. The reasons for this lie on the surface: the German people are a singing people, and the instinct to sing their thoughts and feelings is stronger than in any other race. Again, they did not lose two

centuries under the spell of Calvin's devotion to the Hebrew Psalms, as did Great Britain and America. In contrast with the Latin and Greek hymnodies, it is the voice of the people, not the restrained liturgical voice of the clergy.

The German hymnody is often ponderous and heavy, often tediously prolix and dull, but at the heart of it is a profound realization of the actualities of the Christian faith, and a responsiveness to its appeals to the hearts of men, that one cannot find elsewhere to the same extent.

## *Chapter XIII*

### METRICAL PSALMODY

#### I. CALVIN'S CONCEPTION OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

WHILE Luther recognized the value of hymns as pre-eminent in his work, he still left a large place for the Psalms, himself making some admirable versions and inciting others to do the same. But there were limits to his sympathy with an undue and merely formal emphasis of them. He canceled the obligation of repeating the whole Psalter once a week, instituted by Cardinal Quimonez, as "a donkey's burden." Luther was a reformer, changing only what needed changing in order to secure a deeper spirituality. Calvin and Zwingli were not reformers, but re-creators, setting wholly aside all the liturgy, the ecclesiastical organization, the clerical rules, and the distinctive doctrines of the Roman church, and building up an entirely new church with no other sanction than their interpretation of the Word of God.

Perhaps unconsciously, Calvin harked back to the Roman attitude of Gregory the Great, in insisting on purely Scriptural sources for the service of song. He was too good a Biblical scholar not to know that the Apostolic Church used "hymns and spiritual songs" as well as Psalms; indeed he never categorically forbade hymns of "human composure." But the people had been forbidden the Bible. The Psalms had been

sung by the clergy alone in an already dead language. Calvin declared that "if a man sang in an unknown tongue, he might as well be a linnet or a popinjay." So he reacted somewhat violently. He had a profound sense of the authority of the Word of God, and his mind was possessed by the idea of the divine sovereignty; hence religious rites of human origin seemed trifling and negligible.

This attitude was emphasized all the more by the Latin hymns sung and read in the churches, and on religious occasions, whose chief burden was worship of the Madonna, and even of the saints, against which his mind rose in outraged horror.

## II. CALVIN'S FOLLOWERS MORE EXTREME

Human nature being what it is, it was inevitable that Calvin's followers should carry his ideas to an extreme, and mechanically add the conclusion that hymns independent of the lyrics of the Scriptures should be forbidden.

While Luther stressed the Biblical content of the hymns and exalted the Psalms as the source of religious lyrical impulses, Calvin and his disciples added a rigid and almost superstitious regard for the mere form of the Scripture lyrics. They accepted their distortion and mutilation in giving them a metrical form as justified by the congregational necessity, and by the evident devotional results among the people.

## III. MAROT'S SUCCESSFUL VERSIONS

Beneath his austerity Calvin evidently had an appreciation of literary beauty and grace, for he developed an ambition to clothe the Hebrew Psalms in a literary French metrical dress. It was while this problem was exercising his mind that there fell into his hands the French version of some of the Psalms by Clement Marot (1497-1544), who had come under the influence of Marguerite de Valois, the Huguenot princess, whose *valet de chambre* he was during his early twenties. It is possi-

ble that he and Calvin met at Ferrara in 1535. Though the work of a Huguenot poet, these lyrics were admired in high political and social circles in France. Written in measures fitting them to popular tunes, they were very popular among the royal courtiers, Catholics as well as Protestants, and were soon introduced into other countries.

That he was later persecuted by the Roman ecclesiastics only recommended him the more to Calvin. Here was a poet of high reputation, a skillful versifier of the Psalms, a fellow-sufferer at the hands of the Roman hierarchy—why not commit to his hands the task of supplying Calvin's new church with its needed book of Psalms? So Marot was called to Geneva.

#### IV. DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENEVAN PSALTER

In 1543, nineteen years after Luther's first venture, the *Acht Liederbuch*, appeared, *The Genevan Psalter* was issued in the French language. It contained fifty psalms by Marot. Marot died in 1544. The completion of the Psalter was committed to Theodore Beza of Burgundy, who revised Marot's verses, eliminating the classical allusions and offensive gaiety. With the help of Bourgeois, and later of Goudimel, in completing and harmonizing the tunes, he finished the Psalter in 1562.<sup>1</sup>

#### V. ENGLISH PSALM VERSIONS BEFORE STERNHOLD

There had been English versions of some of the Psalms before Sternhold undertook the task. Bishop Aldhelm of Sherborne, who died in 709 A.D., composed a complete psalter. Two versions were due to Lutheran influence. That of Miles Coverdale, *Ghoostly Psalms and Spiritual Songs*, appearing sometime between 1530 and 1540, used some of the German chorales, including the great "Ein feste Burg."

The Wedderburn brothers of Dundee, Scotland, issued the *Compendious Booke of Gude and Godlie Ballates*, also known as *Dundee Psalms*, on the return of John Wedderburn,

soon after 1539, from Wittenberg, where he had been under the influence of both Luther and Melanchthon. Latin psalms and hymns had no value with young people, he insisted in his preface; "but when they hear it sung into their vulgar tongue, or sing it themselves, with sweet melody, then shall they love their God with heart and mind, and cause them to put away bawdry and unclean songs." While considerably better than the songs the collection displaced, the new book was too cheaply popular, and undignified in many of its religious parodies of popular songs, to satisfy the elders of the Scottish Kirk (!) and they tried to suppress it.

But the lines of religious, social, doctrinal, and political influence connected England and Scotland with France and Geneva so closely that it happened that the new English and Scotch psalmody was based on the work of Marot and Calvin and not on that of Luther. To human minds with some sense of literary dignity and style and of a more spontaneous expression of religious life and experience, it seems a great pity!

The first response in England to the new version of Marot was the Latin version of George Buchanan in 1548. Latin was an entirely dead language to the commonalty, but was quite generally familiar to people of scholarship and culture. This version, in the scholarly language of all Europe (like the Mandarin in China), found wide appreciation in intellectual circles and many editions of it were issued. Of course, the mass of the English people was not affected by it, and it had little or no influence on the development of English psalmody.

That there were vernacular versions already in use, is quite certain. Robert Cowley anticipated Sternhold and Hopkins in the versifying of the whole Psalter, issuing his work in 1549. In the preface to this collection he refers to previous versions which had passages "obscure and hard." Probably they were Lollard or Wycliffite in origin, for these "sweet singers," pre-

cursors of the Reformation to come, worked among the lower classes in the Low Countries as well as in England, singing the Gospel in the vernacular.

## VI. VERSION OF STERNHOLD AND HOPKINS

Undoubtedly it was the French Psalms of Marot, and their great popularity in the highest circles in France, that incited Thomas Sternhold to undertake a like version in the English language. His first issue, probably in 1547 and 1548, contained nineteen Psalms. In 1549 he published another edition containing thirty-seven Psalms. Sternhold died in 1549, leaving but nineteen additional Psalms unpublished. Another poet, John Hopkins, a near neighbor in Gloucestershire, contributed to the edition of 1551. In 1562 the psalter was completed. Of the one hundred and fifty Psalms, Sternhold had supplied fifty-one, Hopkins sixty, all in common meter, and the rest were contributed by various writers. It also contained metrical versions of the Canticles, the Ten Commandments, the Athanasian Creed, the Te Deum, the Lord's Prayer, an English version of the festival hymn, "Veni, Creator Spiritus," and several original English hymns.

This psalter had a popularity equaled only by *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and the *Gospel Hymns* series in the recent past. Within half a century more than fifty editions were issued. By 1841 no less than six hundred and fifty different editions had been absorbed by the religious public—more than all other metrical versions combined.

This version was adopted by the Church of England in 1562 and continued to be used for nearly two hundred and fifty years, despite its notorious crudities and imperfections, and despite the many efforts made to supersede it by other versions and by hymns. The singing of Psalms became universal. At St. Paul's Cross, after the service, there were sometimes six thousand persons engaged in singing Psalms. It was a time of genuine community singing.



## VII. THE SCOTCH VERSION

In 1556, John Knox issued his *Anglo-Genevan Psalter*, based on the 1551 edition of Sternhold and Hopkins, with some alterations and additions. It naturally was greatly influenced by Calvin's *Genevan Psalter*. The *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* is significant chiefly because of its influence on the Scotch Psalter. Through that, it is the source of some psalms and tunes still in use—notably, "All people that on earth do dwell" and "Old Hundredth" to which the Long Meter Doxology is sung.

The Scotch Psalter developed on a different line. The Psalm editors of the Scottish Church accepted eighty-seven of the Anglo-Genevan Psalms, added and somewhat altered forty-two from the final Sternhold and Hopkins editions, and supplied twenty-one from their own versifiers. It appeared in 1564 and was adopted by the General Assembly as its authorized Psalm book.

In 1600 James I began a revision and himself wrote thirty-five of the Psalms before his death. This psalter was completed by William Alexander and was issued in 1630, being known as the *Royal Psalter*. Charles I bound up a revised edition of it with a new liturgy prepared by the Scotch bishops in 1536, and ordered its exclusive use. But the Scotch clergy declined with thanks, having no use for "the mass in English."

But the question of a revision of this Psalter having been raised, its deficiencies, which had been passively accepted, rose up into consciousness. Rous' version, adopted by the Westminster Assembly in 1643, and hence widely used in England, was made the basis of the new Scotch Psalter and, after seven years of amending and revision, was adopted in 1650. It is still used in Scotland and in American Presbyterian churches whose eyes look back reverently to Scotland.

## VIII. ROUS' VERSION

Rous' version was made by Francis Rous, Provost of Eton

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College, Oxford, a Presbyterian lawyer and a man of public affairs. It was an improvement on Sternhold and Hopkins, but still left much to be desired in smoothness of versification and grace of diction, owing to the continued loyalty to the original phraseology of the Psalms. Hence it had some "awful examples," to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, whose repetition here might amuse but not edify. But it also had some happy stanzas that we still are glad to sing, e.g.:

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; he leadeth me  
The quiet waters by."

Compare this with Archbishop Parker's version of the Shepherd Psalm written in 1557:

"To feed my neede: he will me leade  
To pastures green and fat:  
He forth brought me: in libertie  
To waters delicate."

But with the blindness of the versifiers to the need of diversifying their meters in the interest of varied and attractive tunes, all the psalms were written in Common Meter.<sup>2</sup>

### IX. TATE AND BRADY'S "NEW VERSION"

A new version by two Irishmen, Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, appeared in 1696. Tate was a literary man, a playwright, a poet, and finally poet laureate. Brady had a rather varied clerical career in Ireland and in England, becoming chaplain to King William. This will partly explain why this version received royal endorsement and gradually replaced Sternhold and Hopkins in the English Church. It was adopted by the Protestant Episcopal Church of America in 1789. The fact that the Nonconformist churches remained faithful to the "Old Version" and to Rous' version, no doubt

had its bearing on the final acceptance of the "New Version" by the Established Church.

This "New Version" was a little smoother than the "Old Version," and had a little more literary grace, but still was shackled by devotion to "purity"—to the exact thought and phraseology of the Hebrew Psalms. Nevertheless, as Gillman says, "this book contained a plentiful supply of chaff, but perhaps a few more grains of golden corn than Sternhold's." "As pants the hart for cooling streams" and "Through all the changing scenes of life" are still highly prized, and Tate's Christmas Carol, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night" (which appeared in a supplement to the "New Version") is a masterly adaptation of the Nativity story. On the other hand, Montgomery, in comparing the "New Version" with the "Old Version," remarks: "It is nearly as inanimate as the former, though a little more refined." Of the "Old Version" he says: "The merit of faithful adherence to the original has been claimed for this version and need not be denied, but it is the resemblance which the dead bear to the living." Old Thomas Fuller wittily says of Sternhold and Hopkins that "They are men whose piety was better than their poetry, and they had drunk more of Jordan than of Helicon." Thomas Campbell even more harshly exclaims: "With the best intentions and the worst taste, they degraded the spirit of Hebrew poetry by flat and homely phraseology, and, mistaking vulgarity for simplicity, turned into bathos what they found sublime." From the literary point of view these dicta are correct enough, but they overlook what is vastly more important—the high moral and spiritual uses which these homely versions so amply served.

#### X. AMERICAN PSALMODY

The Pilgrims brought with them from Leyden Ainsworth's version of the Psalms, published in Amsterdam—Genevan rather than English in character. Its use was largely confined

to the Pilgrims and their descendants. Presently the copies of both versions became rare and the service of song depended on the "lining out" of the verses.

The first book printed in America was the *Bay Psalm Book*, an independent version of the Psalms made by Thomas Welde, Richard Mather, and John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians, a committee appointed in 1636. It was proposed to make it more scriptural than either of the previous versions used. It appeared in 1640. Its preface consisted of a discourse urging that psalm-singing was both lawful and necessary. During the next century and a half no less than seventy editions were printed. It was improved by Dunster and Lyon and reprinted in Great Britain, eighteen editions being called for in England and twenty-two in Scotland. This was America's first contribution to the song service of the Mother Country, but by no means the last.

It may be interesting to see just what literary style this *Bay Psalm Book* could display, and a few specimens are herewith given. The one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, for instance, was given the following form:

1. "The rivers on of Babilon  
    There when wee did sit downe:  
    Yea, even then wee mourned when  
    wee remembred Sion.
2. Our Harp wee did hang it amid  
    Upon the willow tree,  
    Because there they that us away  
    led in captivitee,
3. Required of us a song and thus  
    ask mirth: us waste who laid,  
    sing us among a Sion's song  
    unto us then they said.
4. The Lord's song sing can wee? being  
    in stranger's land. Then let

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loose her skill my right hand, if I  
Jerusalem forget.

5. Let cleave my tongue my palate on  
if minde thee doe not I  
if chief joys or'e I prize not more  
Jerusalem my joy."

Cotton Mather's rhymeless version was much more sensible in its form, for it eliminated the chief handicap in producing a literal version in metrical form.

As in the Psalm versions of England and Scotland, there was a vivid consciousness of literary and poetic shortcomings; but the sense of obligation to supply a literal translation of the Hebrew overrode all impulses toward a smoother rendering. The preface frankly states the position of the committee: "If therefore the verses are not always so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect; let them consider that God's altar needs not our polishing (Ex. 20), for we have respected rather a plaine translation, than to smooth our verses with the sweetness of any paraphrase, and soe have attended Conscience rather than Elegance, fidelity rather than poetry, in translating the Hebrew words into English language and David's poetry into English meetre."

There were other American Psalm versions, but the only versions worth considering are the revisions of Isaac Watts' Psalms, which will come up in introducing American hymnody later.

### XI. THE VALUE OF THE PSALM VERSIONS

In smiling over this rude psalmody of England, Scotland, and America, it is always to be remembered that these versions were not a literary endeavor. Their ambition was to secure "purity," loyalty to the rather prosaically conceived doctrines of the originals. There was no thought of poetry or of literary finish. The meter and rhyme were practical devices to make congregational singing possible.

## ~~~~~Chapter XIV~~~~~

### THE ENGLISH HYMN BEFORE WATTS

#### I. THE EARLIEST ENGLISH HYMN

JUST as Gregory the Great did not create the music that bears his name, nor Luther the congregational hymnody, so Isaac Watts did not originate the English hymnody of which he is often termed the father. The Lollards, or Wickliffites, sang metrical psalms, and also hymns, in the Low Countries, as well as in England, long before Luther, or Marot, or Sternhold.

Moreover, the emphasis of the Psalms was an ecclesiastical, clerical attitude, while the people at large to whom the Scriptures had been a closed book, and the Psalms an unknown language, sang such vernacular hymns as sprang up among them; so, while we cannot doubt but that they sang some metrical psalms, based on the Wickliffe English Bible, the body of their singing was presumably hymnic.

Indeed, we must go back much farther to find the spring of religious song that was to become a great river of praise. Caedmon, a monk, originally a swineherd, of the early seventh century, supplied the earliest recorded English hymns:

“Now must we hymn the Master of heaven,  
The might of the Maker, the deeds of the Father,  
The thought of his heart.”

Undoubtedly the times before Caedmon were resonant with

earlier songs, for the Venerable Bede (673-735) in the next generation records the fact of a great deal of singing among the people. Indeed, he himself wrote hymns in Anglo-Saxon, as well as in Latin. Patrick and Colombo sang psalms and hymns and made them a means of converting the pagans of Ireland and Scotland.

## II. ENGLISH HYMNODY SUBMERGED BY REFORMED PSALMODY

The urge, not only for versifying all parts of the Scriptures, including genealogies, but of actually singing them with fervor, submerged the native impulse of song. The religious loyalty to the letter of the Scriptures that followed closed the door against the development of the English hymn.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Reeves in his *The Hymn as Literature* remarks: "As vigorous and variegated and prevalent as this union of popular poetry and popular music was in England, it strangely weakened and paled at the one time in English history when it might have been expected most to flourish. The Reformation, born of that new freedom of thought and worship which produces the best hymnody, did not in England, as it gloriously did in Germany, speak out richly in the native vernacular hymn."<sup>2</sup>

## III. ENGLISH LITERARY IDEALS UNFAVORABLE TO HYMN-WRITING

But it was not only the blight of a narrow bibliolatriy that prevented the development of the English religious lyric. English poetry had lost its spontaneity and its gracious simplicity in a self-conscious devotion to false literary ideals.

The conception of a congregational hymn did not exist among the literary men of the Reformation and later. Indeed, that Reformation among the cultured and intellectual classes was not so much a religious transformation as a political and cultural repudiation of clerical bonds, and an enjoyment

of new liberties. There was some religious feeling, of course, but it was expressed in elaborate forms, not in spontaneous simple lyrics that the people could sing.

The technic of the singing hymn had not been developed, nor its limitations recognized. It took nearly a century before even an approximation could be reached to the practicability of the Lutheran hymns, which were written, not by literary connoisseurs, but by men in close touch with the people, men who had with singleness of mind striven to win and edify them. As we study the English lyrics, written, not to be sung, but simply to express the personal feelings of the writer in the current style and in complicated measures, we see how far English poets had to go before a practicable singing hymn could be written.

The conceptions of poetry, the prevalent grandioseness of style, the studied phrasemaking, the excessive Latinity of vocabulary among distinctively literary men, made the simplicity needed in a congregational hymn impossible. Despite Mr. Horder's enthusiasm over the possible use Luther would have made of John Milton, the German hymnody creator could have done nothing with the ponderous large-planning author of *Paradise Lost*, with his wealth of classical allusions and mythology, and his phrasing rich with preciousness. Milton's psalm versions, fine as they are, were simply not singable by the commonalty of his time who were to be depended on to do the singing. He was a writer of odes, not of singing hymns.

Here is a literary hymn—balancing phrases, piling up antitheses, consciously seeking striking and euphonious combinations of words:

"I praise Him most, I love Him best, all praise and love is His;  
While Him I love, in Him I live, and cannot live amiss.  
Love's sweetest mark, laud's highest theme, man's most desired  
Light,  
To love Him life, to leave Him death, to live in Him delight."



The writer of the foregoing, Robert Southwell, a Romanist martyr, writing in prison, could write simple lyrics out of the fullness and genuineness of his religious experience, but it was not in the accepted fashion. What Protestant dare refuse to sing this simple hymn of his?

“Yet God’s must I remain,  
By death, by wrong, by shame;  
I cannot blot out of my heart  
That grace wrought in his name.”

#### IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TECHNIC OF WRITING SINGING HYMNS

All these writers, and many others that might be mentioned, had not acquired the technic of congregational hymn writing. They either did not recognize the limitations of the singing hymn, or refused to be hampered by its restraints.

But presently the idea of the singing hymn defined itself. Thomas Campion in 1613 issued a number of lyrics that combined spiritual insight, literary grace, and practical availability to a hitherto unattained degree. Dr. Benson characterizes his

“Never weather-beaten sail  
More willing beat to shore,”

as “among the loveliest of the lyrics expressing the heavenly homesickness.” Campion was a musician as well as a poet, which partly accounts for the singability of his hymns.

In 1623 George Withers issued a complete hymnbook for the Established Church. It was made up of Scriptural paraphrases and hymns for special occasions. The hymns are superior to previous attempts in structure and method, in their simple piety and practical purpose, and in their availability for actual congregational singing. But in the midst of admirable lines there were strange lapses in taste. The hymn whose first verse began so auspiciously,

“Come, oh, come, in pious lays  
Sound we God Almighty’s praise;

*THE SINGING CHURCH*

Hither bring in one consent  
Heart and voice and instrument,"

makes the singing congregation a conductor directing a vast chorus:

"From earth's vast and hollow womb  
Music's deepest bass may come;  
Seas and floods, from shore to shore,  
Shall their counter-tenors roar," etc.

Clever in a way, but hardly devotional!

Withers' "Musicians' Hymn" has a very practical hint to the "singers' gallery," as well as to the congregation:

"He sings and plays  
The songs which best Thou lovest,  
Who does and says  
The things which Thou approvest."

What Withers' influence on subsequent English hymnody might have been we can only conjecture: the Company of Stationers boycotted his book because he had secured the king's order to bind it up with the Psalter and shut it out from the regular channels of trade. His second collection, "Hallelujah," was even more practicable and candidly didactic in style. But Withers had but a slight, if any, influence, for Sternhold and Hopkins still ruled the worship of the churches.

His immediate successors in hymn writing, Herbert, Donne, Crashaw, and Vaughan, were not influenced by his practical spirit and sang to please themselves, not to lead the congregation.

George Herbert (1593-1633) was a devout soul, full of a usually charming fantasy and fertile in imagery; but antithesis was still an allurements to poets in his generation. His "Antiphon" makes an effective hymn, but the inevitable contrast is still there:

"The heavens are not too high,  
His praise may thither fly;

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The earth is not too low,  
His praises there may grow."

Donne, Crashaw, and Vaughan all share in the quaintness of Herbert and also in his general hymnic impracticability.

Robert Herrick (1591-1674), the singer of rather worldly songs, but a literary artist withal, in his "Litany to the Holy Spirit" reaches more nearly up to the ideal of the singing hymn:

"In the hour of my distress,  
When temptations me oppress,  
And when I my sins confess,  
Sweet Spirit, comfort me."

But when in the second stanza he descends to a description of a feverish sleepless night,

"When I lie within my bed  
Sick in heart and sick in head,  
And with doubts discomfited,  
Sweet Spirit, comfort me,"

a doubt of its congruity on the lips of a crowd of worshipers begins to rise. But when in the fourth and fifth verses one is asked to sing,

"When the artless doctor sees  
No one hope but of his fees,  
And his skill runs on the lees,  
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

"When his potion and his pill,  
His or none or little skill,  
Meet for nothing but to kill,  
Sweet Spirit, comfort me,"

one understands why, despite some fine lines, hymnal editors hesitate to use it.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691), chiefly remembered by his *Saints' Everlasting Rest* and *Call to the Unconverted* and a

mass of other most useful writings, prepared a metrical psalter which found little response; he also wrote some poetry, but, as a child of his age, delighted in antithesis. One of his books of poetry had as its subtitle *The Concordant Discord of a Broken-healed Heart*. His hymns, however, are simple in style and make a close approach to the practicable type. Two of them are still largely in use: "Lord, it belongs not to my care" and "Ye holy angels bright." Had the churches in his day given a fair opportunity, or furnished the inspiration of demand, Baxter might have been one of our great hymnists, superior to Watts in his deeper spirituality.

John Austin (?-1669) wrote some excellent hymns for a book of "Devotions" for family use. Among them is

"Blest be Thy love, dear Lord,  
That taught me this sweet way,  
Only to love Thee for Thyself  
And for that love obey,"

which still finds a worthy place in our hymnals.

About this time (1616) the long poem, "Hierusalem, my happie home," appears to have been written. Only the initials F. B. P. are attached to the manuscript, now in the British Museum. It is conjectured that they stand for Francis Baker Priest. Out of it have been fashioned two very useful hymns: "Jerusalem, my happy home," by Joseph Bromehead in 1795, and "O mother dear, Jerusalem," by an unknown hand. The debt of the original to the Latin is quite evident, but it has original values as well. Aside from its length, a common fault in its time, it approaches the final type of the congregational hymns very nearly in its simplicity, devoutness, and in its practicable measure.

Closely allied to the Herbert school of religious lyrics, Bishop Thomas Ken (1637-1711) had the advantage of belonging to a later generation in which the conception of the congregational hymn had begun to crystallize into a definite form.

His Morning and Evening Hymns are both simple in structure—in Ambrose's iambic long meter—free from affectations and bizarre rhetoric, easily comprehensible, and devout and spiritual. They have been accepted as among the best hymns in the language.

The doxology with which the two hymns close has been sung more frequently and with greater elevation of mind and heart than any other four lines in all earth's literature. There is in this doxology a nobility, a majesty, a comprehensiveness of praise which have not been approached elsewhere outside of the choruses found in the Book of Revelation. English hymnody had at last found its voice, its spirit, and its model.

The conception of the congregational hymn had now been clearly defined and, from Bishop Ken on, English hymnody was established as a distinct department of English lyrical poetry. Hymn writers thenceforward were content to accept the mediocrity Montgomery later called for. The difficulty was that the English Protestant churches, still psalm-fanatic, were not ready to sing the hymns they needed so much for their highest spiritual development, and which now began to be supplied.

That the idea of singing hymns of "human composure" was making progress is evidenced by the issue in 1659 of the first collection of hymns, *A Century of Select Hymns*, by William Barton (1603-1678). He had issued a collection of versified Psalms in 1644 and a little book of Psalms and hymns of thanksgiving in 1651. A little later he published a review of the current Psalm version discussing its "errors" and "absurdities." He issued six collections during his lifetime, most of whose content we would recognize as hymns. His work has little interest to us except as it, as well as that of Wither, Baxter, and Mason, helped to clarify the ideas of the young man Watts.

V. THE IDEAL OF THE SINGING HYMN REALIZED

It was the lack of preparation on the part of the churches, rather than any essential inferiority to Isaac Watts, that prevented John Mason (?-1694) from being recognized as the father of English hymnody. Watts' superiority lay in his having an intenser consciousness of the greater value of the free hymn and the strength and ability to force the issue to a final conclusion.

Mason's hymns were the first to be used in regular congregational worship. Twenty editions of his *Spiritual Songs* were issued; considering the times and the small population, this was a marvelous success. This collection may be considered the thin edge of the wedge, later driven by Watts, between the churches and psalmody. Horder in his *Hymn Lover* declares that "rarely did Watts rise to the height of thought and beauty of expression which are found in Mason's hymns."

One of Mason's most widely used hymns is

"Now from the altar of my heart  
Let incense flames arise;  
Assist me, Lord, to offer up  
Mine evening sacrifice.

Awake, my Love! awake, my Joy;  
Awake, my Heart and Tongue:  
Sleep not: when Mercies loudly call,  
Break forth into a Song."

High authority claims that Mason's hymn, "Thou wast, O God, and Thou wast blest," is one of the best in the language. Its third verse is particularly noble:

"To whom, Lord, should I sing but Thee,  
The Maker of my tongue?  
Lo, other lords would seize on me,  
But I to Thee belong.

THE ENGLISH HYMN BEFORE WATTS

As waters hasten to their sea,  
And earth unto its earth,  
So let my soul return to Thee,  
From whom it had its birth."

His influence on Watts was very considerable. George MacDonald says of Mason's hymns: "Dr. Watts was very fond of them; would that he had written with similar modesty of style." Mason was made to supply many a good line to the hymns of Watts, we are told by those who have compared the hymns of the two writers.<sup>3</sup>

The hymns are good, because the writer was good! Richard Baxter styled him "the glory of the Church of England," saying that "the frame of his spirit was so heavenly, his deportment so humble and obliging, his discourse of spiritual things so weighty, with such apt words and delightful air, that it charmed all that had any spiritual relish."

Before closing this chapter, mention must be made of Joseph Addison (1672-1719), who is so widely known because of his connection with the famous *Spectator*, a weekly devoted to essays on various topics, literary and otherwise. While his essays are his chief claim to literary honor, he wrote five hymns, three of which are found in most of our larger hymnals: "The spacious firmament on high," "When all thy mercies, O my God," "How are thy servants blest, O Lord." These hymns are all most thoughtful and felicitously expressed. They are admirably adapted for the worship of God, but they too unanimously ignore the higher attributes of the divine nature as manifested in Jesus Christ, and the salvation he wrought out for fallen and needy humanity, to take a high place in Christian Hymnody. The same is true of Psalms, of course, but they were written before Christ appeared.

## ~~~~~Chapter XV~~~~~

### ISAAC WATTS AND HIS PERIOD

#### I. THE HYMNIC NEED OF THE TIME

WE have now reached the point in the development of the English hymn where the shortcomings of the metrical versions of the Psalms were keenly realized, and where the conception of the practicable congregational hymn was clarified and the model definitely established.

Someone of combative courage and of organizing ability was needed who would break down the wall of mere usage and custom in the churches—of the sheerly mechanical tradition and mental inertia; all the better, if he could replace the outworn Psalm versions with practicable congregational hymns that would more intelligently and efficiently voice the faith and the experience of God's people. He needed to be a man of clear vision of the essential lyric needs of the church, of a clear conception of the type of hymns best fitted to supply those needs, of literary culture and adaptativeness, and of a high moral courage to face and overcome the extreme conservativeness that seems to be inherent in all ecclesiastical organizations.

#### II. THE LIFE OF WATTS

In the distinct providence of God, the man appeared, exactly fitted for the important task. Isaac Watts was born at Southampton, England, July 17, 1674, the son of a very intelli-



gent and devout schoolmaster, who during the reign of Charles II was imprisoned and exiled from his family for his nonconformity. Isaac was extraordinarily precocious, studying Greek and Hebrew at the age of eight years, writing verses when a mere child, and attempting Latin and English poetry in his schooldays. His brilliant scholarship brought him offers of a career at one of the universities, but he refused, being staunch in his nonconformity.

He became a Nonconformist minister in 1698 and pastor of the Independent Church, Berry Street, London, in 1702. His health being frail, owing to his excessive study as a student, he was given an assistant, Rev. Samuel Price, with whom he spent "many harmonious years of fellowship in the Gospel."

Visiting Sir Thomas Abney, a staunch Dissenter living at Theobalds in Hertfordshire, for a week, Watts was persuaded to remain with him and his wife permanently, making his home with them the rest of his life. He never married. His health was always precarious, and his pastorate at the Berry Street Independent Church, which ended only with his death, was largely nominal.

We rarely think of Isaac Watts as anything more than a hymn writer, but his intellectual activities were wide and his writing outside of hymnody extensive. He wrote a number of treatises on Theology. His textbooks on Geography, Astronomy, and Logic were used in the English universities, and at Yale and Harvard.

### III. WATTS AS A HYMN WRITER

Watts had been recognized from childhood as having a talent in the making of verses. Returning from a church service in Southampton, he sharply criticized the hymns of Barton—an inferior contemporary of John Mason. His devout father, a deacon in the church, playfully, perhaps seriously, replied that he should try his skill in supplying a better one. The challenge was accepted and he brought his father the hymn:

## THE SINGING CHURCH

"Behold the glories of the Lamb  
Amidst his Father's throne;  
Prepare new honors for his name,  
And songs before unknown."

He little realized that it was his life's most illustrious task to fulfill the exhortation of the last two lines.

The success of the new hymn when lined out to the congregation and sung by them led to a demand for more. Thus unconsciously and unpretentiously was ushered in a new epoch in the devotional singing of the Christian Church. Presumably this occurred in his twenty-first year, for this and the succeeding year were spent at home in Southampton in varied studies and in writing hymns.

These hymns seem to have remained in manuscript for some years, despite the earnest protest of his younger brother, who declared that "Mason now reduces this kind of writing to a sort of yawning indifference, and honest Barton chimes us asleep." This literary judgment of young Enoch must not be taken too seriously, except as expressing his eagerness to have his brilliant brother's hymns brought before the public.

It was nearly or quite ten years after the first hymn that a collection of hymns and odes and other poems, *Horæ Lyricæ*, was issued, in 1706. It contained twenty-five hymns, four psalm paraphrases, and eleven religious songs in varied measures and meters. It also contained elegies, odes, and blank verse of a purely literary character. In his preface he suggests the spirit and methods which should later be more fully developed. "The hymns were never written to appear before the judges of wit, but only to assist the meditations and worship of vulgar Christians."<sup>1</sup>

In 1709 the second edition of the *Horæ* furnished an increased number of hymns. In the preface of this edition he confesses that in the hymns of the *Horæ* "there are some expressions which are not suited to the plainest capacities, and

differ too much from the usual methods of speech in which holy things are proposed to the general part of mankind."

The hymns contained in the more popular *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in 1707, and in the augmented edition of 1709, were of a plainer type for "the level of vulgar capacities." The edition of 1709 contained two hundred and fifty-five hymns, seventy-eight paraphrases, and twenty-two communion hymns. The hymns were in only three meters, Long, Common, and Short. Watts had an eye single for practicability.

The four Psalm versions contained in his *Horæ Lyricæ* had a prefatory note, "An essay on a few of David's Psalms translated into plain verse, in language more agreeable to the clearer revelations of the Gospel," which makes certain that he had already clearly in mind the evangelical psalter which, despite his absorption in other tasks and his long illness in 1712, finally appeared in 1719, "The Psalms of David imitated in the language of the New Testament and apply'd to the Christian state and worship." Watts excluded twelve Psalms entirely and omitted passages from some of the one hundred and thirty-eight that were retained, because they were not adapted to Christian use.

Although he never married, Watts was very fond of children. In 1715, in the midst of his program for the public service of song, his *opus magnum*, he prepared his "Divine Songs, attempted in easy language for the use of children." It was to be used in connection with the "Catechism" he had prepared for their use. It was the first collection of its kind and was the forerunner of the immense supply of children's songs that was to grow out of the activities of the Sunday school. One is amazed that the writer of "When I survey the wondrous cross," or "Our God, our help in ages past," could write so tender and graceful a lullaby as

"Hush, my babe, lie still and slumber,  
Holy angels guard thy bed!

## THE SINGING CHURCH

Heavenly blessings without number  
Gently falling on thy head."

### IV. WATTS' ARGUMENTS FOR THE HYMN

However kindly we may estimate the value of Watts' hymns and of his evangelical metrical versions of the Psalms, we must recognize that his service as the protagonist of the free hymn is quite as great. His hymns and evangelical psalter would likely have suffered the fate of those of Wither and Mason, his immediate predecessors, had he not written attractive and practicable congregational hymns and versions, and not accomplished two other results essential to the substitution of the free hymn for the often grotesque Psalm versions.

He did not simply write a miscellaneous lot of religious lyrics and shoot them like arrows into the air; he had a clear and efficient theory of church song, recognizing not only the varied needs, but the psychology underlying those needs, and produced "a system of praise" that supplied those needs and conciliated current prejudices.

Again, in his prefaces and in his *Essay towards the Improvement of Psalmody*, he laid hymnological foundations that not only prepared the way for the introduction of his own hymns and versions, but also for such a fresh consideration of the whole subject as led to the revolution in the English song service; from these have come the freedom and spontaneity, genuineness and sincerity, definiteness of purpose, and deepening of personal experience which have blessed succeeding generations.

His supreme merit, in this definite onslaught on the rigid literalism of the churches, was that he not only brought destructive criticism, but supplied an adequate substitute for that which he condemned.

Watts denied the obligation to sing the Bible. The Scriptures were the Word of God to the soul and the hymn was the work of the soul in response to God. He further denied that

the Book of Psalms was given as a hymnbook for the Christian Church. It was not even adapted to its use, for it was distinctly Jewish and not Christian in ideals and spirit. "Some of 'em are almost opposite to the spirit of the Gospel; many of them are foreign to the state of the New Testament and widely different to the present circumstances of Christians." Before they can be sung in a Christian service they must be rewritten as if David were a Christian and not a Jew.

Even allowing that there was an obligation to sing the Word of God, Watts denied that the metrical Psalm was the pure Word of God. The demands of meter and rhyme so refashioned and even mutilated the Psalms that they no longer were the words of the Scripture, nor even its ideas. Its inspiration suffered a total eclipse under the hands of the versifiers, and the metrical Psalm became a work of "human composure" with none of the vital spirit of the free hymn.

Watts could not understand why "we under the Gospel should sing nothing else but the joys, hopes, and fears of Asaph and David." He declared that "David would have thought it very hard to have been confined to the words of Moses and sung nothing else on all his rejoicing days but the drowning of Pharaoh in the fifteenth of Exodus." He complained that even in those places where the Jewish psalmist seems to mean the Gospel, excellent poet as he was, he was not able to speak it plain, by reason of the infancy of that dispensation, and longs for the aid of a Christian writer.

He set aside the prevalent "superstitious reverence for the letter of the Jewish Scriptures," and in an almost defiant spirit declared, "Though there are many gone before me who have taught the Hebrew Psalmist to speak English, yet I think I may assume the pleasure of being the first who hath brought down the royal author into the common affairs of the Christian life, and led the Psalmist of Israel into the Church of Christ, without anything of the Jew about him."

Whatever devotional value we may assign to the Psalms, we

must accept Watts' fundamental idea that they are not the exclusive formulary of the use of song in the worship of God and in the life of the Church. His further contention that not all the Psalms, nor all parts of them, are adapted to Christian use, we cannot now gainsay. The Jews themselves only used about forty of them. It was not until centuries after the Apostolic Age had elapsed that, due to monkish superstition, all the Psalms were recognized as of equal exclusive use.

So many versions of individual Psalms make such satisfactory hymns and so many hymns are such faithful transcripts of passages from the Psalms, or echoes of their sentiments, that the distinction between psalm versions and hymns in individual cases might well be set aside entirely, as having no actual basis or value.

#### V. WATTS' INSISTENCE ON PRACTICABILITY

While Watts laid the strongest emphasis on the awkwardness and absurdity of much of the Psalm paraphrasing, he was also impressed with the unavailability of the literary hymns of his predecessors, or even of some of his own in his first book. The common people would not sing them, they were out of their reach; moreover, they were not in practicable meters and measures, and did not fit the accepted tunes the people knew. Watts accepted the current Psalm version meters, Long Meter, Common Meter, and Short Meter, and the Psalm tunes at once became hymn tunes. It was quite a handicap to a literary hymn writer, but essential to the practical use of the hymn.

Watts deliberately avoided distinctly literary quality in his hymns, seeking only lucidity and plainness of expression, all within the capacity of the common people. To quote from his prefaces, he "endeavored to make the sense plain and obvious. . . . The metaphors are generally sunk to the level of vulgar capacities. . . . Some of the beauties of poesy are neglected and some wilfully defaced."

Dr. Benson, whom it is always profitable to quote, says: "Watts' work earns a place in the literature of power, the literature that leaves esthetic critics cold while it moves men." Palgrave included nothing of Watts in his *Golden Treasury*, but elsewhere speaks of him as "one of those whose sacrifice of art to direct usefulness has probably lost them those honors in literature to which they were entitled."

## VI. THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF WATTS' HYMNS

The offensive lines in Watts must be judged with due regard to their background. The Sternhold and Hopkins version was vastly worse. It was a time of dry doctrinal preaching and of a literal interpretation of the Bible which to the preachers was largely a mere collection of isolated proof texts. In these matters he was speaking in the idiom and with the accent of his own generation. In the two centuries that have since passed, the sand and gravel and debris have been washed away, and our hymnals contain the pure gold of his verse for our edification and delight. Outside of the hymnbooks of the Wesley brothers, where can we find such a placer mine of spiritual wealth?

At his best Watts wrote hymns of majesty and ecstatic adoration that have never been excelled:

"Our God, our Help in ages past,  
Our Hope for years to come;  
Our Shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal Home."

How he has made the Long Meter measure sound like the Great Open Diapason of the pipe organ in the following lines!

"Before Jehovah's awful throne,  
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;  
Know that the Lord is God alone,  
He can create, and he destroy."

What if John Wesley does add a majestic note or two in the foregoing hymn; the singer of the whole hymn is the noble spirit of little Dr. Watts.

Had David himself returned with an English tongue, he could not have reproduced the spirit of the seventy-second Psalm more nobly:

“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run;  
His Kingdom spread from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

Solomon’s coronation song (Ps. 72) was no more majestic than this crowning hymn Watts wrote for his Lord.

But Watts could not only be majestic; he could be tender:

“When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

Is there a tenderer strain in all English hymnody than the third verse?

“See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

Not in the same exquisite vein of noble tenderness, but perhaps all the more useful for its reduced voltage, is his other hymn of the Crucifixion,

“Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?  
And did my Sovereign die?  
Would he devote that sacred head  
For such a worm as I!”

Its last verse has deepened the consecration of unnumbered millions as they sang the sacred vow:



"But drops of grief can ne'er repay  
The debt of love I owe;  
Here, Lord, I give myself away—  
'Tis all that I can do."

The list of the great hymns that have come down to us from Isaac Watts is too long to be given here, but they enrich the pages of all our hymnals and exalt the spirit of all our church services.

The criticism often urged that Watts wrote too much cannot well be gainsaid, but the striking fact confronts us that most of the great hymns were written by men who wrote too much! The same is true of the composers of our greatest music, as, for instance, Mendelssohn and Handel. Much writing develops technic, ease, spontaneity, unselfconsciousness, that make the heights of feeling and expression more accessible. But what Watts needed was not so much to write less, but to have a competent editor like John Wesley to eliminate his vulgar and often grotesque lines.

That Watts should find plenty of antagonists to pick up the gauge of challenge he threw out was inevitable. His hymns were called "Watts' Whims" in sardonic derision. It is noteworthy that the opposition did not prove so heated against his hymns as against his *The Psalms of David Imitated* (1719). In daring to amend the Judaism of David he had committed sacrilege! This volume practically closed his work of reforming the service of song in the English language. He was but forty-four years old at this time and he lived thirty years more—spent in theological, educational, and devotional writings.

The hymns of Watts slowly found their way among the Nonconformist churches. Before his death a large part of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches were nearly monopolized by them. However, the Established Church still clung to the Psalm Versions.

## VII. CONTEMPORARIES OF WATTS

A contemporary of Watts, Simon Browne (1680-1732) issued a collection of hymns in 1720, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, designed as a supplement to Dr. Watts, containing one hundred and sixty-six hymns which had considerable vogue during the next generation. Now only one hymn, "Come, gracious Spirit, heavenly Dove," survives in some of our hymnals.

Another contemporary was John Byrom (1691-1763), scientist and mystic, whose "Christians, awake, salute the happy morn" is still a Christmas favorite and whose "My spirit longeth for Thee" is "terse and tender in a very high degree."<sup>2</sup> MacDonald speaks of his few hymns as a "well of the water of life, for its song tells of the love and truth which are the grand power of God."

Another hymn writer of Watts' day was Robert Seagrave (1693-?), who added fifty of his own hymns to a collection prepared for his own church at Lorimer's Hall, Cripplegate, London, all of which had a high degree of excellence, of which "Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings" is found in most of our current hymnbooks.

A greater than any of the above was Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), who was a close friend of Isaac Watts, although nearly thirty years younger. He wrote three hundred and seventy-five hymns, most of them as pendants to sermons, recapitulating and enforcing the points of his discourse. They were not collected and published until four years after his death. The fine character and high ability displayed by Doddridge endeared him to many of the most important people of his day. The devoutness, literary grace, and adaptation to actual use of his lyrics were immediately recognized. Their distinctly homiletical character, combined with deep religious feeling and tenderness, and their varied topics, greatly appealed to ministers, and they were recognized as second only to Watts. The Church owes some of its most useful hymns

to him: "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve," "Grace; 'tis a charming sound," "How gentle God's commands," "O happy day, that fixed my choice," "My gracious Lord, I own thy right," are among the many found in all our hymnals. His relative standard may be inferred from the use made of leading hymn writers by Dr. Benson in his *Revised Presbyterian Hymnal*: Watts 49, Charles Wesley 24, Doddridge 13.

## ~~~~~Chapter XVI~~~~~

### THE WESLEYS AND THEIR ERA

#### I. THE INFLUENCE OF WATTS ON THE WESLEYS

THE line of hymnic succession between Watts and the Wesleys was direct and not through Doddridge, for the latter's hymns did not appear until 1754. One-half of John Wesley's *American Collection*, the first hymnbook published in America, issued in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1737, after two years' work in the new Colony of Georgia, consisted of Watts' hymns. It goes without saying that Watts' hymnbooks, with others like Tate and Brady's *New Version*, George Herbert's poems, the hymns of John Austin, of Henry More, and of Norris of Bemerton, were so well known, and so appreciated, that copies of them were included among the books carried to America. In early manhood they met the already elderly Watts, and as they walked they sang together. Indeed, with Dr. Benson we may "infer that Watts' *Psalms and Hymns*, in connection with Tate and Brady's *New Version*, furnished the materials for the singing of the 'Holy Club.' "

It is evident from the list of hymnbooks, and from the list of Wesley's selections for his *American Collection*, that Watts was not the only influence that gave the impulse and fashioned the Wesleyan ideals of the public song service. It is noteworthy that Barton and Mason were not included. The High-Church Anglican Wesleys were not so prejudiced against Watts' Nonconformist hymns as to exclude them.

## II. THE HOME OF THE WESLEYS

With the Wesleys perhaps the strongest influence was that of the family and the home. Their grandfather, John Wesley, was a Nonconformist clergyman, and, what is more to the point, a poet. Their father, Samuel Wesley, was quite a voluminous poet (sixteen volumes), owing his Epworth rectorship to Queen Mary's approval of his *Life of Christ, an Heroic Poem*. One of his hymns, "Behold the Saviour of mankind," still appears in some of our current hymnals.

Their maternal grandfather was Rev. Samuel Annesley, LL.D., a scholarly Nonconformist clergyman. Their mother, Susanna Annesley, is recognized as a woman of extraordinary force of character, organizing ability, and intense piety, the "Mother of Methodism," and even more gifted than her gifted but less steady and dependable husband. It will be noted that both grandfathers were dissenting clergymen.

The Epworth rectory life was intellectual, intensely devout, and full of the singing of psalms and hymns, for it was "a nest of singing birds." When students at Oxford, John and Charles used to walk out into the meadows and sing songs and hymns together.<sup>1</sup>

## III. THE MORAVIAN INFLUENCE

As we shall see, another extremely important influence was that of the Moravians on their personal religious experience, which under the Moravian guidance, on the Atlantic voyage and later, became intense and profound, furnishing tremendous motive power for all their work. The Moravian missionaries brought the realization of the power the Christian hymn can wield, and of the deep spirituality it may be used to express. It was not only the hymns the Moravian brethren sang that impressed John Wesley, but the spirit and genuineness of feeling with which they sang.

## IV. JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley was born at Epworth in 1703. He inherited his mother's organizing and administrative ability, no less than her deep religious nature. He was to Methodist hymnody what John Calvin was to the Reformed psalmody, its initiator and director. He added a critical power and a practical sense of relation of means to ends his younger brother lacked—Charles Wesley wrote the hymns and John winnowed and edited them. At Oxford he was called the "Father of the Holy Club." His aggressive spirit drove him to Georgia as a missionary, where he was a misfit, but where he was subjected to needed spiritual discipline, and to the influence of the Moravian pietism and absorption in spiritual things, so valuable for his symmetrical preparation for his future work. It led to his conversion—or, if you prefer, to his baptism of the Holy Spirit—and that of Charles, in 1738, which opened out to them both a new spiritual dimension. It also led to his interest in the Moravian "Gesangbuch," or hymnbook, from the German of which he translated several hymns for his *Charleston Collection*. On his return to England he took an early opportunity to visit Herrnhut, Saxony, the parent society of the connection. He was delighted with the atmosphere of piety and Christian song which he found there. His pietistic and mystical tendencies were greatly strengthened by his intercourse with Count Zinzendorf and Rothe whom he there met.

On his return to London John Wesley kept up his association with the Moravian brethren for some time; but his active temperament could not long be content with their quiet, contemplative attitude, nor could he overcome his dislike for the emphasis they placed on the merely physical aspects of the life and death of Christ which they had brought over from the Roman Catholic mystics. So they presently parted company to the advantage of the aggressive spirit the Wesleys were developing.

John Wesley was a scholarly man who had acquired all the culture of seven generations of intellectual family life and of the literary training of a great English university. He had the critical faculty well developed, a nice sense of the value of words, and the ability to marshal them for the expression of his thoughts. His sermons and his theological treatises reveal his logical and analytical mind. His feelings were strong, but not of the effusive character.

With this type of mind, it was not strange that as a hymn writer he would succeed better as a translator than as an original hymnist. His important contribution, therefore, consisted of translations from the German of Tersteegen, Gerhardt, Scheffler, Spangenberg, and Zinzendorf, and the amendment or even recasting of hymns by Watts, or of poems by George Herbert. Perhaps his greatest work in hymnody lay in encouraging as well as editing the work of his younger brother, Charles.<sup>2</sup>

In John Wesley's plans to elevate the degraded population of England both spiritually and mentally, the hymn bears an important part. His keen and critical literary faculty was brought to bear upon its cultural as well as spiritual aspects, and his drastic corrections and revisions, as well as his translations, did much to lift the hymnody of his age to a higher literary plane.

#### V. CHARLES WESLEY

Charles Wesley was born at Epworth in 1707, being four and a half years younger than John. He inherited a full portion of the family religious nature, but with his mother's mental energy he combined a double portion of the Wesley poetic temperament. With less of the rigid will of his older brother, he had a more sensitive spirit, a more emotional nature, a greater literary impulse. Critics scold that he wrote too much.<sup>3</sup> As well scold the mockingbird for being so prodigal of its notes or that it occasionally merely twitters.

When he "got religion," his religion made him sing. Did he rejoice? His joy found utterance in a joyous hymn, "O for a thousand tongues to sing." Had he trials? What more natural than a hymn of prayer, "My God, my God, to Thee I cry"? Was there a riot about him? A hymn of steadfastness, "Thou hidden Source of calm repose," sang in his heart. The impulse to write was not always accompanied by creative insight, so, of course, he wrote inferior hymns. The urge to write was too spontaneous that it should wait for the critical attitude. Let John supply that! Charles had the joy of writing and John winnowed the product. There was chaff, of course, but the golden wheat cannot grow without chaff.

It must not be assumed that Charles was only a hymn writer. Immediately on his conversion, he began to preach the need of the new birth, and for fifteen years he vied with John in field work in behalf of the new movement. With his background, his culture and education, his poetic nature and wealth of vocabulary and depth of experience, Charles might be expected to preach a vivid, glowing, flaming message—and such was his style. His meetings carried him into all parts of England, Wales, and Ireland.

What a team the Wesley brothers were! John with his masterly logical sermons and profound theological writings, Charles with his hymns and his sermons aflame with feeling, the Annesley organizing instinct in both of them. What a spiritual force they set in motion that transformed the spiritual and moral life of England and saved its soul—nay more, it swept around the whole earth, and determined the character of nations yet waiting to be born.

## VI. CHARLES WESLEY'S HYMNS QUITE SUBJECTIVE

By the necessities of the situation, by the character of the work, and by his own temperament, Charles Wesley was led to write subjective, emotional hymns, keeping personal experience to the fore. But his emotionality was not shallow



sentiment, but spontaneous and genuine feeling, based on clear recognition of the actual truths of the Scriptures. In a very intense way he had actually experienced the sorrow for sin, the joy of salvation from its guilt and power, complete assurance of divine acceptance, the longing for divine communion, the sense of the love of God as it planned and fashioned his inner as well as his outward life, the certainty of safety from the power of sin in sanctification. He could write affecting invitations to sinners, for he knew their condition and danger, and also the results of peace and joy, of power and efficiency, that the acceptance of Christ would bring. The truths of the Gospel in passing through the crucible of his personality acquired an actuality, a poignancy of appeal, that made his hymns a mighty power, not only in the immediate campaigns of the Wesley brothers, but in the life and work of the Church in the generations to come.<sup>4</sup>

#### VII. WATTS AND CHARLES WESLEY

That was the difference between Wesley and Watts. The latter was objective, reasonable, formal. The majesty of a sovereign God appealed to him. He delighted in the infinite perfections of the divine nature. He surveyed the wondrous cross. He trembled before it, as did the children of Israel before the Holy Mount. His attitude was that of the Old Testament. Watts viewed the sovereignty of God objectively; Wesley felt the facts of salvation as actual experiences.

Charles Wesley was subjective; he expressed the feelings that the truths of the Gospel produced in him.<sup>5</sup>

God to him also was great, but as a Saviour, companion, friend. Why should he tremble? He was not Moses viewing the burning bush, but John leaning on the breast of Jesus. He shared the ecstasies of the apostles and disciples portrayed in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup>

So Watts gives dignity and majesty to the early topics of our hymnbooks on the attributes of God, his worship, the awe of

the soul in the presence of its sovereign Lord in hymns like "Before Jehovah's awful throne," "Great God! how infinite thou art," "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath," "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," "Our God, our help in ages past," while Charles Wesley fills the sweeter, tenderer, more intimate departments of salvation, forgiveness, communion with God, with the odor of the spikenard of his heart in hymns like "Depth of mercy! can there be," "I know that my Redeemer lives," "Jesus, Lover of my soul," "Love divine, all loves excelling." How well these singers of the Lord's song supplement each other, and how much more symmetrical and complete are our hymnals because both have written in their own lines and styles!

Which is the greater hymn writer? That is a mooted question that need not be decided here. In Scriptural content the older man is superior, as, at his best, he is in majesty of style. For formal services of worship his hymns are more fitting and impressive. On the other hand, Wesley was superior in quantity and in the number of hymns of high quality. It must be granted that he is more poetical, more graceful, more suave and human. His range is more extensive, his emotion deeper and more noble. In immediate results on the lives of the people Charles Wesley is incomparably richer than Watts, for his hymns then and since turned multitudes unto righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

#### VIII. THE ISSUES OF THE WESLEYAN HYMNS

Space is wanting, and the profit would be slight, to give a catalogue of the sixty-four original issues of hymns that John published from 1737 to 1790, the mass of them for the use of the evangelistic campaign. They were largely occasional, issued to meet a pressing but only temporary need. They varied from a single sheet containing but a single hymn (Charles Wesley's hymn praying for his brother's long life) to the two volumes with two thousand and thirty short hymns

on Scripture passages. It was not until 1780 that a regular hymnbook "for the use of the people called 'Methodists'" was issued, containing five hundred and twenty-five hymns.

### IX. THE METHODIST TUNES

So practical a mind as that of John Wesley, who had from childhood engaged in sacred song, would not be expected to overlook the great importance of the tunes to which the new hymns were to be sung. In 1742 he printed a *Collection of Tunes* in which only three of the *Old Version* tunes appeared. Tunes were freely borrowed from the musical *Supplement to the New Version*, six were secured from German Moravian sources, and a few were new. Tunes were later supplied by Handel and Lampe; popular melodies which the Wesleys picked up in their preaching tours were also adopted.

Some twenty years later fugal tunes became popular among the churches, but became known as "Old Methodist Tunes," although they had never been officially recognized and had first been written in Scotland.

When we regard the quantity and quality of the Wesleyan hymns, or their adaptation to the spiritual and evangelistic purposes for which they were written, or the body of teaching they conveyed, or the spiritual fervor they created and are still creating in millions of souls, or the influence they exerted on all subsequent hymnody, we do not find the sweeping statement of Dr. James Martineau, the Unitarian divine and hymnbook editor, as exaggerated: "After the Scriptures, the *Wesley Hymn Book* appears to me the grandest instrument of popular religious culture that Christendom has produced."

### X. INFLUENCES OPPOSING THE WESLEYAN HYMNS

The contemporary prejudice against the Wesleyan hymnody was very strong and bitter. There were many influences against them: the conservative devotion to the psalm versions, "New" and "Old," the Nonconformist loyalty to the psalms

and hymns of Watts, the Established Church's resentment against the revolvers against established rule and custom within her bounds, the formalist objection to what seemed to them the fanatical, extravagant, and effusive type of piety, the emotional, subjective, experiential style of the hymns, and (worst of all!) the low social class that constituted the bulk of the followers of the Wesleys. The result was that both in Great Britain and in America the Wesleyan hymns crept very slowly into the hymnbooks of the churches outside the Methodist movement. It was many years before any appeared in the English church hymnals; even when they did, Charles Wesley's name did not appear with them; it even happened that other writers were credited with them. In America, where the Methodists were the Salvation Army of their day, the Wesleyan hymns were slow of recognition. This was partly due to the general, almost fanatical, devotion to Watts' hymnody.

The Arminian attitude of the Wesleys, as against the rigid Calvinism of both the Established and the Nonconformist churches, led to acrid theological discussions that intensified the opposition to the movement they headed. Even among those favorable to the spiritual reformation was there an element antagonistic to the Wesleys. Whitefield, Toplady, and the Countess of Huntingdon were leaders in this revolt.

The fact that Charles Wesley rather monopolized the writing of hymns undoubtedly had its adverse influence. John Wesley did not encourage others to write.<sup>8</sup> This accounts for the fact that comparatively few of their immediate associates wrote hymns, and some of these drifted into other relations. What else could a man expect who fearlessly amended, revised others' hymns, and then warned the general hymnbook maker regarding the Wesleyan hymns as follows: "Hymn-cobblers should not try to mend them. I really do not think they are able."

## XI. OTHER METHODIST HYMN WRITERS

Among these transient supporters was Edward Perronet (1726-1792) of Huguenot stock. He wrote "All hail the power of Jesus' name," which makes so noble a climax for many of our services. For a time he was a preacher in the Wesleyan connection. He then adopted Calvinistic views, and joined the forces of the Countess of Huntingdon, preaching under her direction. His caustic Gallic wit, exercised against the Established Church, offended his patroness and he became the pastor of a small congregation of dissenters.

Another associate of the Wesleys was Thomas Olivers (1725-1799), who had small educational advantages, but was an indefatigable worker. One of his hymns has kept its place in our hymnals, "The God of Abraham praise." Montgomery says of it: "This noble ode, though the essay of an unlettered man, claims special honor. There is not in our language a lyric of more majestic style, more elevated thought, or more glorious imagery."

John Bakewell, the head of a prominent academy at Greenwich, was a local preacher of whom his tombstone, near to that of John Wesley in the cemetery of the City Road Chapel, records that "he adorned the doctrine of God, our Saviour, 80 years and preached his Gospel 70 years." He is remembered by the hymn, "Hail, Thou once despised Jesus," which is found in most of the current hymnals.

## XII. CALVINISTIC-METHODIST HYMN WRITERS

There were no poetic restraints felt by the adherents of the Calvinistic wing of the Methodist movement as met the associates of the Wesleys, and the number of hymn writers in its ranks is larger.

William Williams (1717-1791), "the Watts of Wales," spent his life in working in the Welsh Calvinistic-Methodist connection. Early in his career the need of appropriate Welsh hymns was so pressing that recourse was had to a sort of

Eisteddfod of hymn-writing in which he easily won first honors. He was an indefatigable preacher, taking all Wales for his parish. His chief claim to immortality is his hymn, "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah," originally written in Welsh, but soon used in the Whitefield Methodist Connection in England. His missionary hymn, "O'er the gloomy hills of darkness," while not so popular, has had a wide use.

John Cennick (1718-1755) was originally associated with the Wesleys as a preacher, but the burning question of Calvinism separated them and he became associated with Whitefield and later with the Moravians. Two hymns of his were extremely popular both in Great Britain and in the early years of Methodism in America: "Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone," and "Children of the heavenly King." The former was used as the verse basis of a great many "spiritual" choruses in pioneer times. His "Lo! He comes with clouds descending" was reshaped and rewritten by Charles Wesley and Martin Madan. The literary quality of his hymns is not high, but their sincerity and adaptation to universal Christian experience give them practical value.

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778) was associated with the Wesleys and with the Calvinistic-Methodist leaders, but was a Church of England clergyman. He wrote four hundred and nineteen hymns; only a few continue in use. Notable among these is "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," which has been almost universally used and most mercilessly amended and revised. It has been translated into many languages, Gladstone having translated it into Latin, Greek, and Italian.

Montgomery says of Toplady's hymns: "There is a peculiarly ethereal spirit in some of these, in which, whether mourning or rejoicing, praying or praising, the writer seems absorbed in the full triumph of faith." Another hymn of Toplady's, "Deathless principle, arise," has been characterized as "almost peerless," but it is rather a reading hymn.

XIII. BAPTIST HYMN WRITERS

While the Methodists were enriching the hymnody of the Christian Church, the Baptists were not idle. The second reformation of England did not leave them unaffected, even though they were not officially associated with it.

Their chief hymn writer was Anne Steele (1716-1778), an invalid of great spirituality and piety and of much literary felicity as well as facility. She wrote one hundred and forty-four hymns and thirty-four versions of psalms. Her hymns are meditative in style, graceful and gentle in spirit. She is best remembered by her hymn of resignation, "Father, whate'er of earthly bliss." Other hymns still widely used are "Now I resolve with all my heart," the hymn regarding the Scriptures, "Father of mercies, in Thy word What endless glory shines," and the (for her) enthusiastic hymn of praise to Christ, "To our Redeemer's glorious name." Her vogue in America at one time was very great.

John Fawcett was another Baptist hymnist of note. He issued one hundred and sixty-six hymns, three of which are standards in our day: "How precious is the book divine," "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing," and "Blest be the tie that binds." Besides the duties of a heavy pastorate at Wainsgate (with a salary of less than two hundred dollars) he did a great amount of literary work. The third hymn mentioned above has done more for Christian unity than all arguments and commissions.

Another hymn writer of note, who may be classed as a Baptist, was Robert Robinson (1735-1790). Converted under Whitefield's preaching, he later took a Baptist pastorate at Cambridge. He was very active in a literary way. He began a *History of Baptists* in 1781 which appeared in 1790, but in spite of laborious research it did not reach the completeness he desired. Besides eleven hymns of but moderate value written for Whitefield, he wrote a Christmas hymn, "Mighty

God, while angels bless Thee" and the ever-useful and prayerful "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing." This was another favorite basis for "Spiritual" revival choruses in America. There was a lack of steadiness in his temperament. After writing *A Plea for the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, he later came under suspicion as a Unitarian and Socinian.

Samuel Medley was a midshipman in the navy, but being sorely wounded in a terrible naval battle off Cape Lagos, he refused to continue as a naval officer. During his recovery he was soundly converted under the influence of his grandfather Tonge. After being at the head of a school for a time, he accepted a Baptist pastorate. Medley wrote a number of hymns, of which "O could I speak the matchless worth," "Awake, my soul, to joyful lays," "I know that my Redeemer lives," and "Mortals, awake, with angels join," are still found in most of our hymnals. He claimed no literary merit for himself, but his hymns have found a hearty response in England, and even more in America.

Joseph Grigg (1720-1768) was not a Methodist or a Baptist, but a Presbyterian. He is further noteworthy as an "infant phenomenon," having written a very familiar hymn, "Jesus, and shall it ever be?" at the age of ten years. He was in humble circumstances at first, "a laboring mechanic." He was assistant minister in a prominent London Presbyterian church for four years, then "married well" and retired, still writing and preaching. His "Behold, a Stranger at the door," with a stirring tune by T. C. O'Kane, has been widely used in America as an evangelistic hymn with a refrain.



## ~~~~~Chapter XVII~~~~~

### HYMNS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

#### I. RISE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE ENGLISH CHURCH

ALTHOUGH the Wesleys were Church of England clergymen, the tide of religious feeling they set in motion could not sweep over the mass of the population without its waves dashing across all ecclesiastical and traditional barriers. But John Wesley's somewhat arrogant spirit, the extreme methods which he found necessary to reach the lower classes, so desperately in need of a new religious impulse, above all, his sharp reaction against the high Calvinistic theology of the Church, repelled many who had been deeply affected by the Methodist atmosphere that enveloped them and had felt a new sense of obligation to bring back their people to a true religious life.

#### II. EARLY COLLECTIONS OF EVANGELICAL HYMNS

The effectiveness of the spontaneous Methodist singing was evident enough and the Evangelical ministers of the Established Church felt the need of collections of hymns that should achieve the same results without what seemed to them the doctrinal vagaries and emotional extravagances of the Wesleyan hymns. Nor were they at first willing to set entirely aside the psalmody that had served the church for so many generations.

As might be expected, the earliest collections of hymns for

use in the Established churches were largely based on Non-conformist and Wesleyan materials, since most of their editors, and the churches they wished to serve, were under the influence of the Countess of Huntingdon, who in turn was in close touch with the Calvinistic-Methodist movement.

One of the first of the collections of the Evangelical wing was that of Martin Madan, *Psalms and Hymns*, containing 170 hymns without order or arrangement, except that sacramental hymns had a department by themselves. Madan used a free hand in revising and remodeling the hymns he selected, sometimes for good, frequently for ill. He was quite a musician, supplying tunes, thirty-three of which were his own composition, of which "Huddersfield" and "Helmsley" still occasionally appear in our hymnals. His book was used to a considerable extent and helped to hasten the introduction of hymns in the Church of England. Other collections of the same name and type were issued by Berridge and Conyers.

More important was Toplady's *Psalms and Hymns*, issued in 1776. Despite his virulent attacks on the Wesleys, he used quite a number of their hymns, without credit and drastically revised. His collection contained 418 hymns, some by Watts and by other Nonconformists. His revisions were not wholly on doctrinal grounds, but on literary as well—"God is the God of *Truth*, of Holiness, and of Elegance. Whoever, therefore, has the honor to compose, or to compile, anything that may constitute a part of his worship should keep those three particulars constantly in view." In this remark, found in his preface, Toplady anticipated the later period of the literary hymn by Heber, Keble, and Milman. This collection continued in use for nearly fifty years.

### III. EVANGELICAL HYMN WRITERS

With the exception of this later collection of Toplady these hymnbooks were mere compilations. The impulse of this Evangelical wing to write hymns of their own did not long

delay. The most notable of these hymn writers were John Newton (1725-1807) and William Cowper (1731-1800). They co-operated in the issue of *Olney Hymns*, so called after the village of which Newton was the curate.

John Newton was born in London. His mother, who was a pious Dissenter, and had dedicated her boy from his birth to the Christian ministry and had tried to train him in preparation for this work, died when he was but seven years old. He grew up to be a wild, profligate, wicked young man; he speaks of himself as "once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa." At the age of twenty-three he again came under religious influences and became an ardent Christian.

It was not until he was nearly thirty-nine years old that he entered the ministry of the Established Church, being appointed curate of the village of Olney. He had always had an impulse, even during his wildest years, to read and study and to add to his general culture. Hence, in spite of his vagrant life (having spent eighteen years on the sea) and his secular pursuits, he came into the ministry with a rough-hewn education, and a practical and resourceful attitude of mind, that served him well in his aggressive ministry. His spiritual experience was deep and intense. He had been in close touch with Whitefield, the Wesleys, and other leaders in the great evangelistic movement.

For his work as a curate in the Established Church, the hymns of Watts lacked the deep personal spirituality for which his own soul sought expression. The Wesleys supplied that element abundantly, but their hymnbooks did not express his Calvinistic attitude, nor fit his local needs. His own urge to write hymns and his intimacy with Cowper, which undoubtedly seemed a providence, encouraged him to produce *Olney Hymns*, which contained 280 hymns by Newton and 68 by Cowper.

Newton sympathized with Watts in his objection to pro-

nouncedly poetic elements in hymns; in his preface he remarks that "the imagery and coloring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be admitted very sparingly." The book was dedicated to "the use of plain people," to promote the faith and comfort of sincere Christians. To secure these, "perspicuity, simplicity, and ease" were sought. Yet some of Newton's best hymns closely approach the best of his friend, the poet Cowper. Genuine feeling gave lyric wings.

Of his 280 hymns, the most successful in maintaining a place in our hymnals are: "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound," "Approach, my soul, the mercy seat," "Glorious things of thee are spoken," "Come, my soul, thy suit prepare," "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," "Safely through another week," "While with ceaseless course the sun," "One there is, above all others." What a noble chaplet of pearls for his Lord is this amazing contribution by the former "servant of slaves"!

Newton's famous coworker on the *Olney Hymns*, William Cowper, was the son of one of the chaplains of George II and was born in Hertfordshire in 1731. He was frail and shy, and had a very painful experience among the boys of the Westminster School which he attended for ten years. Doubtless his later mental affliction was due in large part to the bullying of his schoolmates. He studied law, but did not find it to his taste. At the age of thirty-six he moved to Olney, where he met John Newton, who became his close friend and protector as well as his leader in the writing of hymns. He cooperated with Newton's religious work as lay reader and wrote his hymns for the cottage prayer meetings that were a feature in Newton's work.

While his literary work shows no trace of his melancholia, being cheerful and even humorous, his hymns frequently show traces of it, notably in "God moves in a mysterious way" and "Oh, for a closer walk with God." Newton's habit of introspection may have influenced him, and the obscurity of the people and of the occasions for which he wrote may have

given him a sense of freedom in expressing his deeper, subconscious experience. He was an exceedingly spiritual-minded man. It was said of him by one who often heard him, "Of all the men I ever heard pray, none equaled Mr. Cowper." He had a vivid and intense experience when he was converted: "For many succeeding weeks tears were ready to flow if I did but speak of the Gospel, or mention the name of Jesus. To rejoice day and night was all my employment. Too happy to sleep much, I thought it was lost time that was spent in slumber."

Cowper's literary work was done after he was fifty years old—indeed, after his contributions to *Olney Hymns* had been made. His hymns were really preliminary studies for his secular work.

Cowper made a very important contribution to the Christian hymnody of the ages: "God moves in a mysterious way," "Oh, for a closer walk with God," "Jesus, where'er thy people meet," "Sometimes a light surprises," "There is a fountain filled with blood," "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord," which will all survive as long as devout hearts meditate and sing. *Olney Hymns* was very widely accepted and had more to do with the introduction of hymns into Anglican services than any other hymnbook up to that time. It was speedily reprinted in America and was very popular there.

Beyond all its Church of England predecessors, it established the ideal of the hymn as evangelical, as an expression of personal spiritual experience, as a vehicle for the conveying of spiritual truth. It was closely akin to the Methodist ideal, but more sober and sedate, with less of the poetical element. The hymnbook was the crystallizing force of the Evangelical party and its unifying discipline. It did not win the co-operation of the whole Church, by any means, but it prepared the way for the final acceptance of the hymn as an inherent part of the church service in that communion.

While the *Olney Hymns* continued in use by the Evangeli-

cal wing of the Established Church, there continued to be *Psalms and Hymns* issued by various compilers, Basil Woodd, Simeon Bidulph, Cecil Venn, and others, all giving increasing attention to the hymns, and extending their use, in the church service.

#### IV. HYMN WRITERS OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL

If in the actual singing hymn up to this time there had been any definitely literary quality or poetic spirit, it had been in spite of a theory that the hymn must be plain and simple and adapted to plain people, as in those of Watts and Newton, or somewhat unconsciously so by reason of an imagination vitalized by deep feeling, as in those of Charles Wesley. The hymn had been a practical religious vehicle for expressing feeling and impressing truth, not an artistic and a literary effort.

From this time on the Romantic movement in literature began to affect the ideal of the hymn. Since the hymn was to become a part of the religious service, instead of a Nonconformist addition to the sermon, and since the metrical psalm was to pass away because of its literary shortcomings and absurdities, it was felt that the opportunity had come to put a higher literary quality, a more vivid imagination, a more definitely poetic element into the hymn—hence the literary singing hymn came into being.

This was all the more opportune, since literature was turning to religion for its themes. Coleridge issued his *Religious Musings*, Wordsworth his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, Moore his *Sacred Songs*, and the libertine Byron his *Hebrew Melodies*. In 1807 the literary remains of the lamented Henry Kirke White, including his ten hymns, among which was the sublime "The Lord our God is clothed in might" and his spiritually autobiographical "When marshalled on the mighty plain," were edited by Robert Southey. It is also worth while noting that from 1809 to 1816 Reginald Heber printed his

religious poems and his hymns. In 1827 John Keble's *The Christian Year* made its appearance with its materials for singing hymns. In the same year the hymns of Bishop Heber and of Henry Hart Milman greeted the Christian public.

As early as 1809 Heber was considering the use of a hymnal in his parish church. In 1811 he published four hymns in the *Christian Observer* as specimens of a series he was contemplating. He proposed a hymnbook that should be "a collection of sacred poetry." He sought the help of Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and other literary men of prominence, but only Henry Hart Milman, the great church historian, responded. The ecclesiastical authorities sympathized, but thought the church unready for an authorized hymnbook.

After Heber's death in India in 1826, his widow brought the manuscript back to England and it was published in 1827—not as a hymnbook, however, but in the form and style of current poetic issues. In this book appeared fifty-seven hymns by Heber and twelve by Milman. Having due regard to its size, it was probably the richest contribution ever made to Christian hymnody.

After the lapse of a century, his hymns are still in current use, many of them inevitable in every hymnal whether churchly or popular, such as "From Greenland's icy mountains," "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," "The Son of God goes forth to war," "By cool Siloam's shady rill," "Bread of the world, in mercy broken," "Brightest and best of the sons of the morning."

The beauty of Heber's style was recognized from the first. His hymns were distinctly literary in flavor, poetically conceived, with varied rhythms and forms of stanza. But he did not transgress the limitations of the singing hymn, as had the literary men of a century and more before, nor did he ignore the practicability of the small number of verses. The hymns were poems, but they were congregational hymns none the less. But they might have been all this and yet perished

## THE SINGING CHURCH

by the way. It was their deep spirituality, their lucid expression of Christian truth, transmuted by intense conviction and personal experience into a personal appeal that was abiding, that have made them immortal.

Dean Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868) was a brilliant scholar and church historian and a poet of great reputation. His hymns are strong, churchly, thoughtful to a high degree, but they lack the poetic charm of those of Heber. Of the eleven that appeared in Heber's posthumous collection, and of others that were printed later, only one, his Palm Sunday hymn, "Ride on, ride on in majesty," is certain to be included in every hymnal. The litany, "When our hearts are bowed with woe," and "Oh help us, Lord, each hour of need," are only occasionally used.

Like Saul among the prophets, we find the author of *Lalla Rookh*, Thomas Moore (1779-1852), enrolled among our English hymn writers. The charm of his secular verse and songs is found also in his *Sacred Songs*, from which his ever-useful and tender "Come, ye disconsolate" has been taken; it is found in most of our hymnals. Less often do his "Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea" and "O Thou who driest the mourner's tear" find a place. Not directly associated with ecclesiastical circles and lacking in religious fervor, he yet deserves a place among distinctly literary hymn writers.

No small factor in the development of the literary hymn was *The Christian Year* by John Keble (1792-1866). It was not a collection of hymns, but a series of poems appropriate to all the several sacred times and seasons; but out of it were salvaged a number of hymns that have served the needs of high liturgical churches on special days. *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, the High-Church hymnal so popular in Great Britain and its dominions, contains no less than eleven of these adapted hymns. The Christian Church at large is a grateful debtor to this devotional poetry for the two hymns, "Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear," the evening hymn, and "The



voice that breathed o'er Eden," the wedding song. Beyond the value of these excerpts from his poems was the poetic stimulus that enriches all subsequent hymnody by raising the literary quality of the ideal hymn.

It was this literary quality of the work of the foregoing writers, their definite recognition of the liturgic needs of the Church, and their high church ideals and sympathies, that won the final victory of the hymn over the metrical psalm in the Church of England. This party had been the last stronghold in England of metrical psalmody.

#### V. CONTEMPORARY HYMN WRITERS

Although contemporary with the foregoing romantic school, Thomas Kelly (1769-1854), originally an Evangelical Church of England clergyman, later on an Independent, was not particularly influenced by them. He was an indefatigable hymn writer; his collection of *Scripture Hymns* finally contained 765 hymns, all original. His ideal was still that of Watts, Wesley, and Newton—the useful hymn. He had no conscious striving after literary quality, but, like Newton, frequently rose to a high standard in this particular when lifted by his theme. He was an earnest, pious, zealous, enthusiastic preacher, and liberal with his large wealth. His influence in Ireland was widespread and counted largely for piety and for evangelistic aggressiveness.

Some of our most widely used hymns are from his pen: "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices," "Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious," "On the mountain's top appearing," "The Head that once was crowned with thorns," "Zion stands with hills surrounded."

Another distinguished contemporary, James Montgomery (1771-1854), was probably more directly influenced by the literary impulses of the times. A Moravian layman, the son of a Moravian minister, he was a professional writer and editor of a secular newspaper of considerable influence. For years

a worldling, he was forty-two years old before he publicly professed his acceptance of Christ.

He had written quite a good deal of secular poetry up to this time; now he turned to writing hymns, which he had ceased to do since he was a boy of fourteen. His poetry was highly appreciated at the time, but it is now forgotten, although his hymns keep his memory green. He had served a full literary apprenticeship and had formulated his theories of the hymn—its character, its content, its limitations—before he began writing, so that his hymns have an average excellence and effectiveness that can be paralleled only by those of Bishop Heber. His critical attitude is very evident in his introduction to his second book, *Christian Psalmist*: "The faults in ordinary hymns are vulgar phrases, low words, hard words, technical terms, inverted construction, broken syntax, barbarous abbreviations that make our beautiful English horrid even to the eye, bad rhymes, or no rhymes where rhymes are expected, but above all numbers without cadence." It is not surprising that, with this keenly critical approach, he made many alterations in Cotterill's *Selection of Psalms and Hymns*, which he was asked to edit, nor that he almost rewrote the Moravian hymnbook on which he labored for twelve years.

The list of Montgomery's widely accepted hymns is very large: *The New Methodist Hymnal* has 8, the *New Presbyterian Hymnal* 9, *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1904 Ed.) 13.

The most widely used of Montgomery's hymns are: "Angels from the realms of glory," "Forever with the Lord," "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," "Hark the song of jubilee," "In the hour of trial," "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire," "Oh, where shall rest be found," "The Lord is my Shepherd, No want shall I know."

#### VI. MINOR HYMN WRITERS

There are some minor writers in this and the succeeding generation that deserve passing mention. The man of a single hymn sometimes strikes twelve.

Among these is John Marriott (1780-1825), a Church of England vicar whose "Thou, whose almighty word" is in the first rank because of its dignity and sustained feeling. It is one of our best missionary hymns.

James Edmeston (1791-1867), a London architect, served his day and generation with hundreds of hymns for adults and children; only one of them has become a permanent addition to English hymnody, the evening hymn, "Saviour, breathe an evening blessing."

Another layman, Sir Robert Grant (1785-1838), was conspicuous in his day as a statesman, and finally as Governor of Bombay; he was a man of deep piety and elevation of mind. He wrote a number of thoughtful and impressive hymns, but he made his most permanent contribution to the Christian Church's sacrifice of praise in his noble "Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above," which is in the first rank for its noble poetry as well as its profound devotion.

Another writer of high merit is the butcher's son, Henry Kirke White (1785-1806), whose death at the early age of twenty-one years, after writing at the age of seventeen some poems of such merit as to arrest the attention of the literary world, was a distinct loss to English hymnody. How great that loss can be judged from the high quality of his "The Lord our God is clothed with might," "Oft in danger, oft in woe," and his Christmas hymn, "When marshaled on the nightly plain." His struggles with poverty in seeking an education, with skepticism in finding peace of soul, with dread disease to which he had to succumb, invest his story with a poignant pathos.

Another hymnist deserving attention was Bernard Barton (1784-1849), a Quaker banker, twenty of whose hymns came into general use. Two of them seem to have won a permanent place in our hymnody, "Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace" and "Walk in the light! so shalt thou know"—not great hymns, but extremely useful.

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) entered the church as a profession, but presently was led into a deep religious experience by attending the dying bed of a neighboring clergyman who, too, had looked upon his work as a means of livelihood. The fruit of this experience was the hymns that have been so loved and appreciated on both sides of the ocean. The favorites among them are "Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide," "Jesus, I my cross have taken," "As pants the hart for cooling streams," and "Praise, my soul, the King of heaven." The pathetic story of his last days has touched the hearts of God's people as they have sung his swan song, "Abide with me"—the finest evening hymn of the Christian church—if it is accepted as an evening hymn.

That a Unitarian, Sir John Bowring (1792-1872), should have written so noble a hymn about the cross of Christ as "In the cross of Christ I glory," expressing all its spiritual implications, can be explained only by his orthodoxy of heart. His superficial reasonings were the outgrowth of his early educational and social environment, and were not in co-ordination with his deeper convictions. He was a voluminous writer. His extraordinary genius for languages is revealed in his series of "Specimens" from the poetry of no less than five European languages. Politically he was even more conspicuous than Sir Robert Grant, but, like him, his name will be ever revered for a single great hymn, "In the cross of Christ I glory." Other hymns in common use are "Watchman, tell us of the night" and "God is love; his mercy brightens."

Josiah Conder (1789-1855), the compiler of the *Congregational Hymn Book*, wrote fifty-six hymns for it, one of which is very impressive and worshipful, "The Lord is King! lift up thy voice," which will undoubtedly live through coming generations. His other hymns are uniformly good and of a high literary standard, but with less appeal.

## VII. THE HYMNS OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

Cardinal Newman held that John Keble was the originator

of the Oxford Movement<sup>1</sup> by his great Assize sermon on "The Great Apostasy" preached at Oxford, and by his emphasis of the church's calendar in his *The Christian Year*; but he can hardly be associated with the school of hymn writers that grew out of it, for some of them repudiated the literary hymn entirely.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was the leader of the movement back to the ideals of the pre-Reformation church. He wrote some poetry, notably "The Dream of Gerontius," and a few hymns. Of these, "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom" is the most widely known, because of its attractive music, as he himself testifies. "Praise to the Holiest in the height" is really a more serviceable hymn for actual church services.

His disciples, Edward Caswall (1814-1878) and John Mason Neale (1818-1866), opened new veins of hymnic wealth in their translations from the Latin and the Greek, with which they greatly enriched the treasury of sacred song. In the enthusiasm evoked by their success, the suggestion was seriously made that all the post-Reformation hymnody be set aside to give way to the medieval and even earlier hymns!

Caswall devoted himself to the Latin medieval hymns and sequences and made some surpassing translations, or, if you please, transformations—e.g., "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," "The sun is sinking fast," "My God, I love Thee, not because," and "When morning gilds the skies" from the German. He was a Church of England man, but in 1847 he entered the Roman Catholic Church, following his leader, Dr. Newman.

Dr. Neale did not leave the English Church, but was quite prominent in High-Church circles. He was intensely interested in the liturgics of his church, which led to his studies of the early Greek church and its breviaries. He brought to his translations of Greek hymns a literary skill, a spiritual insight, and a fervor that made him the primate among those who

found their inspiration in these ancient books of service and breathed into these ancient lyrics the breath of modern life. Among his most notable successes are: "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" "Christian, dost thou see them?" "The day is past and over," "Fierce was the wild billow," "'Tis the day of resurrection," "Brief life is here our portion," "Jerusalem the golden." It must be remembered that these are not literal translations, but English hymns made up of ideas suggested by phrases in the originals. Only a poet imbued with devout feelings, responding to the vague suggestions of the often obscure originals, could have produced them.

Another disciple of Cardinal Newman who also followed him into the Roman Catholic Church was Frederick W. Faber (1814-1863), a poet by the grace of God, a devout Christian, a man of intense convictions, but somewhat temperamental and impulsive. Among his many good hymns are: "My God, how wonderful thou art," "There's a wideness in God's mercy" (sometimes beginning "Was there ever kindest Shepherd"), "O Paradise! O Paradise," "Hark, hark, my soul! angelic songs are swelling," "Faith of our fathers! living still." Few that sing the last-mentioned hymn realize that it refers to the faith of the Roman Catholic saints and that the hymn had to be cleansed of its Mariolatry before being used in our Protestant hymnals. Nevertheless, in its present form it is a very impressive and valuable hymn that has been redeemed from the propagandist vagary of its original writer.

Still under the influence of the Oxford High, or Anglo-Catholic Church, we find Mrs. Cecil Frances Alexander, (1823-1895), the writer of many hymns, especially for children, among which are a number that promise permanent usefulness: "There is a green hill far away," "Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult," "The roseate hues of early dawn."

Bishop W. W. How (1823-1897) wrote a number of excellent hymns for his hymnal, *Psalms and Hymns*, some of which have since found their way into other hymnals. Perhaps those

that have appealed most are "O Jesus, Thou art standing," "We give Thee but Thine own," "O Word of God incarnate," "Soldiers of the cross, arise," "Summer suns are glowing." His hymns are thoughtful, devout, and full of tender feeling; their literary quality is admirable.

A very copious writer of the same generation was Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879), whose devotional poetry touched the heart of her generation to a remarkable degree. Her pen was quite facile, and not all she wrote had more than transient value: but some of her hymns the Christian Church will permanently treasure: "Take my life, and let it be," "I could not do without Thee," "True-hearted, whole-hearted," "Lord, speak to me, that I may speak," "I gave my life for thee." Miss Havergal was a woman of profound Christian experience, which is voiced by her hymns.

Among the later writers is Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1927), voluminous writer on a variety of topics as well as a fairly popular novelist. He wrote the stirring "Onward, Christian soldiers" for a local processional of school children and assured himself of an immortality by a half hour's writing that all his laborious literary work would not have won him. He also wrote an appealing evening hymn, "Now the day is over," that Joseph Barnby has made popular by his pleasing tune, "Merrial."

In spite of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns and a number of minor poets, and in spite of a wealth of charming folk songs, to prove that the spirit of song dwells in the Scottish breast, Scotland has made but a small contribution to English hymnody. The metrical psalm ruled the Scotch religious heart with a rod of iron. Only during the last generation has Scotia almost unwittingly made an important contribution. Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) was an industrious writer on many topics. He allowed no hymns to be sung in his church, but by a strange anomaly he issued three series of *Hymns of Faith and Hope*—in 1856, 1861, and 1866. While

these hymns were being increasingly sung around the world, his church sang metrical psalms! More than one hundred of his hymns are in common use. Among them are the following: "I heard the voice of Jesus say," "I lay my sins on Jesus," "Go, labor on; spend and be spent," "Beyond the smiling and the weeping," "A few more years shall roll," "I was a wand'ring sheep," "When the weary, seeking rest."

Another Scotchman, George Matheson (1842-1906), the blind preacher, has written, among many others, a hymn whose beauty and mystical suggestiveness has rapidly given it wide usefulness: "O Love, that wilt not let me go." Fortunate in having a very pleasing and effective tune, St. Margaret by Albert L. Peace, it promises to be a permanent fountain of blessing.



## ~~~~~Chapter XVIII~~~~~

### AMERICAN HYMNODY

#### I. THE TRANSITION FROM PSALMODY TO HYMNODY

THE metrical versions used in New England were Ainsworth's in Plymouth and vicinity under Pilgrim influence, and Sternhold and Hopkins', where Puritan influence controlled. The New England ministers were scholarly and knew their Hebrew Bible. The Sternhold and Hopkins version was unsatisfactory, not so much for its literary deficiencies, but because it was not literal enough, did not reproduce the Hebrew minutely enough. This led, as we have seen in Chapter X, to the Bay Psalm Book of 1640, which was widely adopted, although Sternhold and Hopkins still had its partisans.

These versions could not but find sharp critics among a more or less scholarly ministry and in time their absurdities weakened their hold upon the New England churches.

The utter collapse of the congregational singing due to the lack of tunes in the psalm books, and the absence of competent precentors,<sup>1</sup> hastened the revolt among some of the churches against the versions. Yet the tyranny of "use and wont" kept most of the churches in line, only a few of them adopting the later version of Tate and Brady.

The interest aroused by the "singing school," and by the organization of choirs due to the multiplication of tune books, both English and American, delayed the abolition of the older metrical versions and postponed the introduction of Watts'

Imitations and Hymns for several decades, but the complaints from the larger and more cultured churches and their scholarly ministers became more vociferous.<sup>2</sup> The combination of the absurdities of the metrical versions, and those created by the senseless repetition made necessary by the fugue tunes then in use, became unendurable.

## II. THE INTRODUCTION OF WATTS' HYMNS

Watts' *The Psalms of David Imitated* was very well adapted to serve as an entering wedge. It brought a certain sanction by making David's Psalms the foundation. They were still psalms, not hymns, and so satisfied to some degree the claims of tradition, and placated those who would have balked at hymns of "human composure." Benjamin Franklin in 1729 was the first to reprint the Imitation, but complained that the copies remained on his shelves unsold. The demand evidently grew, for in 1741 he issued a second edition. The first reprint of Watts' Hymns appeared in 1739 in Boston. Three years later, in 1742, Franklin reprinted them in Philadelphia, and years later still, they were republished in New York.

Whitfield's visit to America and the outburst of singing of the Great Awakening (1742), with its profound religious experiences that could find no adequate expression in the Psalms alone, gave Watts' Hymns a larger opportunity. In 1744 the singing of Watts' Hymns was one of the diversions of the people when they met together.

It was not until after the Revolution that the introduction of Watts' Psalms and Hymns became general. There were a number of issues with such abridgments or changes as were made necessary by Watts' references to British conditions, by Joel Barlow, a patriotic poet, author of the *Columbiad*, and later U. S. Minister to France, and by Nathan Strong, Samuel Worcester, and Timothy Dwight, the distinguished president of Yale College. All these had considerable vogue, especially the last which contained metrical versions of the Psalms Watts

had omitted and other psalms versified anew. President Dwight's "I love Thy kingdom, Lord" appeared as a versification of Psalm 137. It is a classic, one of the two leading hymns on the Christian Church, and is rarely omitted in our hymnals. Besides the Psalms it contained 263 hymns, 168 of which were by Watts.

The contentions which had occurred over methods of singing—the "Deaconing" or lining out of the hymns, the use of choirs, the fugal tunes—now gave way to differences over the use of various editions of Watts, or over the use of hymns in church service. The tradition, happily unjustified now, that the music of the church constituted "the war department" seems to have been originated during that century of conflict.

### III. THE BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN HYMNODY

Wherever Watts had been able to overthrow the tyranny of the metrical versions, he seemed to have instituted a tyranny of his own, to the detriment of the development of an American hymnody. But here and there lonesome birds were singing songs of their own, early harbingers of the springtime of American sacred song.

Samuel Davies, the eloquent President of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University, began writing hymns in the middle of the eighteenth century that were accepted in English hymnbooks before they became generally known in America. Their quality may be judged from his hymn of consecration:

"Lord, I am thine, entirely thine,  
Purchased and saved by blood divine;  
With full consent thine I would be  
And own thy sovereign right in me."

The other verses are equally good, if not superior.

Mather Byles, the brilliant Tory preacher of Boston, was a poet of no mean pretensions and in close touch with Swift,

Pope, and Watts. He wrote hymns that served their purpose in his day and generation, but have not been recognized since, partly because of his political attitude and his advanced views, being one of the first to use Watts' Hymns in his congregation. His somewhat oratorical style is evident in his hymn on the greatness of God:

"Who can behold the blazing light?  
Who can approach consuming flame?  
None but thy wisdom knows thy might;  
None but thy word can speak thy name."

Another early songbird was Samson Occom, the Mohegan Indian, who raised the money in England which later became the financial nucleus of the present Dartmouth College. His autobiographical hymn, "Waked by the Gospel's joyful sound," was widely used in England and translated into Welsh, among whom it was used in their revivals and "led many hundred sinners to the cross of Christ."

Harry Alline (1748-1783) was the most copious hymn writer of that early day, his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* containing four hundred and eighty-seven hymns, all from his own pen. His

"Amazing sight, the Saviour stands,  
And knocks at every door!  
Ten thousand blessings in his hands  
To satisfy the poor,"

was quite a favorite for many years, but was finally submerged in the larger tide of sacred song that sprang up through the years.

The scholarly and eloquent Nathan Strong in his *Hartford Selection* used several hymns of his own. His patriotic hymn, "Swell the anthem, raise the song," has had a long life of wide usefulness.

While Watts still reigned supreme during the next quarter of a century, the impulse and the ability to write acceptable

hymns was rapidly developing. Eccentric Elder John Leland (1754-1851) among a lot of almost amusing trash wrote an evening hymn that had very wide acceptance. Dr. Duffield characterizes it as a "classic in its unpretending beauty," and Dr. Charles S. Robinson esteemed it so highly as to exclaim, "May it live forever and ever!" Unfortunately the supply of fine evening hymns is so great that in the competition Leland's hymn has fallen by the way. The last verse will enable the reader to savor its quality:

"And when our days are past,  
And we from time remove,  
Oh, may we in Thy bosom rest,  
The bosom of Thy love."

How many ministers who sing "Coronation" so heartily are aware that the composer, Oliver Holden (1765-1844), was a hymn writer as well as a musician? Yet one of his hymns had a wide use in both America and England:

"They who seek the throne of grace  
Find that throne in every place;  
If we live a life of prayer,  
God is present everywhere."

After a long and useful life, it, too, has practically disappeared from our hymnals.

#### IV. COLLECTIONS OF AMERICAN HYMNS

By 1824 the evangelistic movement, partly a heritage from the Great Awakening, partly due to the Methodist aggressiveness, and partly to the religious needs of a widely scattered and pioneer population, made it evident that the hymns of Watts and his school, with minds set on worship in more or less formal services for the edification of the elect, and ignoring the needs of an urgent discipling, were not fitted for revival work. Rev. Asahel Nettleton, an evangelistic minister greatly interested in foreign missions, issued his *Village*

*Hymns*, containing six hundred hymns, only fifty of which were by Watts. Some of Charles Wesley's hymns were included, but most of these were credited to other authors. While other English sources were drawn upon, the book was noteworthy for the American hymns that appeared in it. Hymns by Davies, Occom, Alline, Strong, and Dwight were used. An eager quest for new American hymnists was rewarded by contributions from William B. Tappan (" 'Tis midnight; and on Olive's brow" and "The ransomed spirit to her home"); from Phoebe Hinsdale Brown ("I love to steal awhile away"); and from Abby B. Hyde ("Dear Saviour, if these lambs should stray").

William B. Tappan (1794-1849) was a largely self-educated man, having attended school but six months. His hymn "There is an hour of peaceful rest" was widely published in America and England, and on the Continent, and used to be inevitable in the hymnbooks of sixty years ago. His "'Tis midnight; and on Olive's brow" still holds its place, though largely descriptive, but none the less impressive and useful.

Mrs. Phoebe Hinsdale Brown (1783-1861) still is represented in most of our hymnals by her "I love to steal awhile away," with its pathetic story of her misunderstood habit of prayer among the scenes of nature. Greater than the hymn, valuable as it has been, is her contribution to the progress of Christ's Kingdom in the work of her missionary son, Rev. Samuel R. Brown, in China and Japan and that of her grandsons in the latter country.

But the revival took on an intenser form under the preaching and praying of Charles G. Finney and, bright as was the spirit of the *Village Hymns*, it called for something more vigorous and with a greater appeal to the unsaved people who were to be won, especially in the music. Rev. Joshua Leavitt, a Congregational minister, a militant reformer, enemy of intemperance and slavery (a dangerous attitude in those days), and an ardent believer in the revival work of Finney, issued

his *The Christian Lyre* in 1830, which created quite a sensation. Its hymns did not differ much from those of *Village Hymns*, but it was more practical in that it supplied the music on the page opposite to each hymn, no small advance on the ponderous tune book that had to be held in one hand and the hymnbook in the other. Lowell Mason and Thomas Hastings had been editing these tune books filled with dull and stupid music, in whose abundant chaff an occasional grain of gold occurred, which the Christian Church has been glad to cherish. The music in *The Christian Lyre* was bright and popular, being secular melodies the people were singing. Leavitt had taken a leaf out of the book of the old mass-writers, who used popular melodies for their descants, and of Luther and Bourgeois, in taking popular tunes to reach the people. It was an anticipation of Horace Waters' policy in his *Sabbath School Bell* in 1859. It was also an anticipation of Moody and Sankey's *Gospel Hymns*, except that Leavitt had no Fanny Crosby or Lydia Baxter to supply new texts, and no reserve of popular music by Lowry, Doane, Bliss, and others to draw upon.

As Horace Waters stimulated Bradbury into developing the popular Sunday school music, one of whose by-products was the Gospel song, so Leavitt stirred up Mason and Hastings to begin the issue in 1832 of *Spiritual Songs for Social Worship*, in twelve parts, more nearly the archetype of the future *Gospel Hymns*. *The Christian Lyre* left no residuum for future generations, but *Spiritual Songs*, edited by men of wide experience, in touch with the most cultivated clerical circles of the day, one of them a hymnist of both facility and felicity, made important permanent contributions not only to American but to universal Christian hymnody.

In this collection appeared Thomas Hastings' "Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning," "Gently, Lord, O gently lead us," "How calm and beautiful the morn," "Child of sin and sorrow." Here also appeared his enlargement of Thomas

Moore's "Come, ye disconsolate." Add to these his tunes "Ortonville," "Retreat," "Zion," "Toplady," and others and his other hymns, "Return, O wanderer, to my home," "Delay not, delay not, O sinner, draw near," "The Saviour bids thee watch and pray," and it will be seen that Thomas Hastings, even if he is not in the first rank as hymnist or composer, deserves well of the Christian Church.

In this same volume of Spiritual Songs first appeared Rev. Samuel F. Smith's two great hymns, "The morning light is breaking" and "My country, 'tis of thee." He was still a theological student, twenty-four years of age, when these were written. The theme of the latter was suggested in a general way by Lowell Mason, who needed a patriotic song for his children's singing schools, and who supplied him with some music he had recently received from Germany. During a leisure moment his eye fell on "Heil dir im Sieger-Kranz," the German "God Save the King," written to the English tune, "God Save the King." This latter fact he did not know, but liked the tune and was moved to write unknowingly our National Hymn. Sung by Lowell Mason's children's chorus, it was rapidly introduced and was presently *viva voce* accepted as the long-desired National Anthem. Practically an improvisation, not intended for wide use, it is open to criticism; but it is greatly superior to its only competitor for national honors, "The Star-Spangled Banner," because of its practicability in singing, its dignity, and its noble expression of the American spirit. That it refers to hills and not to prairies, and speaks of "pilgrim's pride" (without the capital) is open only to capricious criticism.

His "The morning light is breaking" was due to the missionary spirit that was prevalent in the theological seminaries during that period. It is the peer of Heber's "From Greenland's icy mountains" as a missionary hymn; many recent critics greatly prefer it.

Another great hymn that made its premier appearance in



*Spiritual Songs* was "My faith looks up to Thee," by Dr. Ray Palmer (1808-1887), set to one of Lowell Mason's best tunes, "Olivet." Meeting Dr. Palmer on the street, Mason asked him whether he had not an appropriate hymn for his forthcoming book; young Palmer remembered he had some verses in his pocketbook and handed them to Mason. Meeting Palmer a few days afterwards on the street, Mason with great earnestness exclaimed: "Mr. Palmer, you may live many years and do many good things, but I think you will be best known to posterity as the author of 'My faith looks up to Thee!'" The prophecy, so literally fulfilled, speaks well for Mason's critical acumen. Ray Palmer, despite Bishop Wordsworth's objection to the pronouns of the first person, wrote "My faith," "I pray," "my guilt," for his hymn was not intended to be sung, but simply to express his own spiritual experience. It was a personal prayer none the less that it took a metrical form. It is one of the great factors in its world-wide appeal that it becomes the personal expression of every individual who sings it.

But Dr. Palmer was not the author of only a single song: he wrote many others of almost equal value. Writing a sermon on the words of Peter, "Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love," he was suddenly overwhelmed by his rapture of love for the Christ, and, the sermon forgotten, he wrote down the hymn the church will never allow to die:

"Jesus, these eyes have never seen  
That radiant form of thine;  
The veil of sense hangs dark between  
Thy blessed face and mine.

I see thee not, I hear thee not,  
Yet art thou oft with me;  
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot  
As where I meet with thee."

In his dying hour he was heard to repeat with broken voice the last stanza of this hymn:

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"When death these mortal eyes shall seal,  
And still this throbbing heart,  
The rending veil shall thee reveal,  
All glorious as thou art."

Other important hymns of Dr. Palmer's are: "Come, Jesus, Redeemer, abide Thou with me," "O Jesus, sweet the tears I shed," "Take me, O my Father, take me," "O Christ, the Lord of heav'n, to Thee," "Come, Holy Ghost, in love." His translation of "Jesu, dulcedo cordium," the Paris cento of "Jesu, dulcis memoria," by an unknown Spanish abbess, is most highly esteemed: "Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts." This cento is made up of selected verses from "Jesu, dulcis memoria," from which Edward Caswell took his admirable "Jesus, the very thought of Thee."

Dr. Leonard Bacon (1802-1881), the son of a missionary among the Indians of Michigan, is noteworthy in two particulars: he issued, at the age of twenty-one, the first collection of missionary hymns printed in America, and he wrote the New England patriotic hymn still used in our churches,

"O God, beneath thy guiding hand  
Our exiled fathers crossed the sea;  
And when they trod the wintry strand  
With prayer and psalm they worshiped Thee."

Born in Detroit, he sang the praise of the divine hand that founded the New England churches.

## V. EPISCOPAL HYMN WRITERS

While the Anglican Church remained faithful to the traditional metrical versions well into the nineteenth century, the American Episcopal Church was hospitable to hymns much earlier. Already in 1789 the House of Bishops ratified the addition of hymns to the psalter. From decade to decade the demand for additional hymns grew until in 1823 William A. Muhlenberg, a rector of Lancaster, Pa., issued his *Church*

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*Poetry*, consisting of psalms and hymns, which was adopted by the rectors of other Episcopal churches. In 1827 appeared *Hymns of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, the majority of whose hymns were by Watts, Doddridge, Steele, and Charles Wesley. Its most distinctive feature was the new hymns supplied by five Episcopal writers, Dr. H. U. Onderdonk, Dr. William Augustus Muhlenberg (1796-1877), Bishop George W. Doane (1799-1859), J. W. Eastburn, and Francis S. Key (1779-1843).

Of Dr. Onderdonk's nine hymns one came into general use, "The Spirit in our hearts."

Dr. Muhlenberg was more successful, for three of his five are recognized as a part of American Hymnody: "I would not live alway; I ask not to stay," "Shout the glad tidings, exultingly sing," and the baptismal hymn, "Saviour, who thy flock art feeding."

Bishop Doane was represented by two hymns, both of which still find a place in our hymnals: "Thou art the way; to thee alone," "Softly now the light of day." The latter is one of our most acceptable evening hymns. Fully as useful is his vigorous missionary hymn, which, with its very appropriate tune, "Waltham," by J. Baptiste Calkin, is adding inspiration everywhere to the cause,

"Fling out the banner! let it float  
Skyward and seaward, high and wide;  
The sun, that lights its shining folds,  
The cross, on which the Saviour died."

Francis S. Key, the well-known writer of "The Star-Spangled Banner," to whom Baltimore has erected an elaborate statue, furnished a fine hymn of praise, "Lord, with glowing heart I'd praise Thee."

## VI. UNITARIAN HYMNODY

The production of original hymns in New England took a peculiar course. After Samuel F. Smith, the spirit of praise

left the Orthodox churches and took refuge with the ostensible Unitarians. The reaction against the rigid and harsh Calvinism was not so much against the doctrine of the deity of Christ, as against the false corollaries drawn metaphysically from the noble doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, as well as the crass, materialistically conceived, conception of the state of the impenitent dead, that was painted so luridly and offensively in song as well as in sermon.

Henry Ware, Jr. (1794-1843), was the son of Professor Henry Ware, who held the chair of Divinity in Harvard College for thirty-five years. He himself became professor of Pulpit Eloquence and Pastoral Care in the same institution in 1830. The pastor for thirteen years of a prominent Unitarian church in Boston, he never wavered in his faith in the deity of Jesus Christ. How otherwise could he have written that triumphant Easter hymn:

“Lift your glad voices in triumph on high,  
For Jesus hath risen, and man cannot die;  
Vain were the terrors that gathered around him,  
And short the dominion of death and the grave.”

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), America's first great poet, wrote five hymns for Henry D. Sewall's Unitarian Church hymnal in 1820. He was a member of the First Congregational Unitarian Church in New York City. Yet in 1865 he could write a hymn containing the following stanza:

“Lo! in the clouds of heaven appears  
God's well-beloved Son;  
He brings the train of brighter years;  
His Kingdom is begun;  
He comes, a guilty world to bless  
With mercy, truth, and righteousness.”

In 1875 he could still write in a hymn on “The Star of Bethlehem,”

“Yet doth the Star of Bethlehem shed  
A luster pure and sweet;

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And still it leads, as once it led,  
To the Messiah's feet."

An even more remarkable Unitarian was Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), the great physician, but even greater poet. He had the reputation of being rather radical in his religious views; he was a humorist whom human life rather amused than impressed seriously (though he was tender enough to human suffering), but, when a hymn seemed an appropriate close for one of his genial essays, he could write,

"Lord of all being, throned afar,  
Thy glory flames from sun and star;  
Center and soul of every sphere,  
Yet to each loving heart how near."

But unless in the deeper depths of his soul there still lingered faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, how could he write,

"O Love divine, that stooped to share  
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,  
On thee we cast each earthborn care;  
We smile at pain while thou art near."

Especially that last verse of unshaken faith:

"On thee we fling our burdening woe,  
O Love divine, forever dear;  
Content to suffer while we know,  
Living and dying, thou art near."

What might not Oliver Wendell Holmes have done for Christian hymnody, had he had Charles Wesley's evangelical experience and piety?

Another Unitarian deserving recognition was Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876), who is not remembered because of his successful pastoral career of forty years, nor by his theological treatises and religious writings, but by his two Christ-

mas hymns, perhaps the best written in America (not forgetting Bishop Brooks' "O Little town of Bethlehem")—"Calm on the listening ear of night" and "It came upon the midnight clear." The first was written soon after his graduation from Harvard College in 1834, and the other in 1849 after he had been in the pastorate over a decade. Of course, he was a firm believer in the deity of Christ, else he could not have written these hymns.

After Dr. Ray Palmer, our best American hymnist is John G. Whittier (1807-1892), who never aspired to such honors! His hymns have been most deftly extracted from longer poems and, despite their being mere fragments, are distinctive hymns in progress of thought and structure. Moreover, they are the very choicest passage in these longer poems. The additional marvel is that this Unitarian Hicksite Quaker, who was not taught to sing hymns in his youth, should have given finer expression than any other writer to the sense of present intimate communion with Christ:

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet  
A present help is He;  
And faith has still its Olivet,  
And love its Galilee."

## VII. LATER ORTHODOX HYMN WRITERS

To this generation George Duffield, Jr. (1818-1888), may be said to have belonged. His hymn, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus," is never omitted from any reputable collection of hymns, liturgic or popular. He was a foremost figure in the Philadelphia revival of 1857 and 1858, being associated with Alfred Cookman, the Methodist, and Dudley A. Tyng, the Episcopalian, whose dying words suggested the hymn.

Old Dr. Lyman Beecher was a giant in his day, but his chief glory was in his remarkable family of children. While Henry Ward was most conspicuous in his day, he was hardly more so than Harriet Beecher Stowe (1812-1896), the author of

*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which, with Hanby's *Darling Nellie Gray*, prepared the heart of the North to buy at a tremendous cost of treasure and blood the Emancipation Proclamation. But Mrs. Stowe is not simply a historic character whose work is done; she is living still in her hymns, notably the exquisite morning hymn, "Still, still with thee, when purple morning breaketh," a fitting mate for Lyte's evening hymn, "Abide with me; fast falls the eventide."

Mention should be made of Anna Warner (1820-1915), whose children's hymn, "Jesus loves me, this I know," set to Bradbury's simple pentatonic melody has girdled the globe. Other hymns by Miss Warner are "One more day's work for Jesus" and "We would see Jesus; for the shadows lengthen."

Among later American hymn writers is Mary Artemisia Lathbury (1841-1913), who wrote "Break Thou the bread of life" (not a communion hymn, by the way) and "Day is dying in the West," with William F. Sherwin's tunes, which are to be found in all our hymnals and which are very tender, very useful.

The American Episcopal Church has supplied some admirable hymns through Bishop Arthur Cleveland Coxe (1818-1896), who wrote "Oh, where are kings and empires now," the almost apocalyptic "We are living, we are dwelling," and the missionary "Saviour, sprinkle many nations," all hymns of high worth; and Bishop Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), whose "O little town of Bethlehem" is a favorite Christmas carol.

Mrs. Frances Crosby Van Alstyne (1820-1915), familiarly known as "Fanny Crosby," would be the premier hymn writer of America if the criteria were quantity and wideness of use. There can be no question as to the evangelistic and devotional value of her hymns, whatever their literary quality or permanent appeal may be. "Safe in the arms of Jesus," "Rescue the perishing," "Blessed Assurance," "Pass me not, O gentle Saviour," "Saviour, more than life to me," "I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice," "Jesus, keep me near the

cross," and many others will probably be permanent in hymnals and song collections of a popular and evangelistic type.

Valuable hymns of the same practical gospel song type have been written by Mrs. Lydia Baxter, Philip Paul Bliss, Annie Sherwood Hawks, Mrs. Ellen Huntington Gates, Rev. E. A. Hoffman, Miss E. E. Hewitt, Mrs. C. H. Morris, President J. E. Rankin, D.D., and many others.

Mrs. Elizabeth Prentiss (1818-1878), daughter of the saintly and greatly beloved Rev. Edward Payson, wrote *Stepping Heavenward*, a book that stimulated and cheered multiplied thousands and lifted their spiritual ideals. Of her 123 *Religious Poems*, one has won a permanent place in our hymnals, "More love to Thee, O Christ." It is not a substitute for Mrs. Adams' "Nearer, my God, to Thee," but a complement.

Other writers of single hymns that the Church has used with great effect are Dr. Washington Gladden's (1836-1918) "O Master, let me walk with Thee," a hymn of Christian service; Dr. Sylvanus Dryden Phelps' "Saviour, Thy dying love;" Dr. Edward Hopper's "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me;" Dr. Joseph Henry Gilmore's (1834-1918) "He leadeth me, O blessed thought;" Ernest W. Shurtleff's (1862-1917) "Lead on, O King eternal;" Frank Mason North's (1850-1935) "Where cross the crowded ways of life"; the second, third, and fourth of the songs just mentioned have a Gospel song origin.

More recent writers are Rev. Frederick L. Hosmer and Rev. William C. Gannett in whose *The Thought of God* are found hymns of deep piety and strong religious feeling. Room is made for two stanzas of Dr. Hosmer's "Found,"

"O Name, all other names above,  
What art thou not to me,  
Now I have learned to trust thy love  
And cast my care on thee?"

What is our being but a cry,  
A restless longing still,



*AMERICAN HYMNODY*

Which thou alone canst satisfy,  
Alone thy fullness fill?"

A more important recent hymn writer is Rev. Louis F. Benson, D.D. (1855-1930), the editor of the current Presbyterian hymnals. This history of Christian hymnody cannot close more fittingly than to quote part of a stirring hymn by this greatest of American hymnologists:

"Forward! singing 'Glory  
To our Lord the King';  
Forward! Trusting only  
In the name we sing.  
See the day is breaking  
And the road points far;  
March, with eyes uplifted  
To the Morning Star.

Blessed is the Kingdom;  
Blessed be the King!  
Crowned is every duty  
His commandments bring.  
Now to serve like soldiers,  
Now to work like men;  
Oh, to love as God loves  
And to conquer then."



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THE SINGING CHURCH

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PART III  
PRACTICAL HYMNOLOGY



## ~~~~~Chapter XIX~~~~~

### THE STUDY OF HYMNS

#### I. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF HYMNS

It has been said that the two great books which every minister should study are the Bible and human nature. A third great book may be added, in which the foregoing two unite in a new combination—the Hymnbook.

In that collection of hymns the truths of the Bible find their expression in a new form. They are no longer Oriental in spirit, based upon human experiences under different conditions and in a different intellectual atmosphere, but modern, and strong with a fresh vitality. They have passed through the crucible of intense personal feeling and experience, and have been recast in forms more comprehensible to a different race and to a different age.

Next to his library of comment upon the Bible, and of exposition of its doctrines, should be that of the minister's hymnological books giving the history, the illustrations, and the methods of making effective the hymns he uses in his congregation.

#### II. PERSONAL ADVANTAGES OF SUCH STUDY OF HYMNS

The first line of the study of hymns should be contributory to his own personal development.

*Literary Pleasure.* A great delight awaits the minister of culti-

vated taste and sensibility, for there are not only ten really good hymns, as a famous literary doctor<sup>1</sup> once insisted, but hundreds of them, whose distinction and beauty of phraseology, whose fresh and orderly development of ideas, and whose elevation and glory of thought give unfailing literary pleasure. How can one read Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Still, still with Thee," that best of American morning hymns, without exquisite delight?

"Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,  
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee:  
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,  
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee."

Prominent among these literary hymns will be that hymn of majestic praise by Sir Robert Grant:

"Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above,  
Oh, gratefully sing his power and his love;  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of days,  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.  
  
Oh, tell of his might, oh, sing of his grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space:  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm."

Here are majesty and beauty of thought, flawless phraseology, and musical numbers. No editor has found excuse to alter or amend it.

Even Isaac Watts, who boasted his freedom from literary trammels and who illustrated that freedom all too often and too perversely, proved his latent poetic powers in the noble poetry of

"Our God, our Help in ages past,  
Our Hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home."

## THE STUDY OF HYMNS

That the literary quality of Adelaide A. Procter's hymn, "My God, I thank Thee who hast made," is high no one would deny:

"My God, I thank Thee, who hast made  
The earth so bright,  
So full of splendor and of joy,  
Beauty and light;  
So many glorious things are here,  
Noble and right."

The minor chord in the third verse but renders more poignant the high glory of her praise:

"I thank Thee more that all our joy  
Is touched with pain;  
That shadows fall on brightest hours,  
That thorns remain;  
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,  
And not our chain."

There is a mine of inestimable literary wealth awaiting the search of discriminating taste.<sup>2</sup>

*Literary Culture.* But many ministers of limited native susceptibility to literary and poetic beauty, and perhaps of none too efficient literary opportunities, will not be able at once to enter into the delight of the literary qualities of hymns. All the more will it be important for them to study their hymnal for the sake of its opportunity for deepening their capacity for enjoying literary values. Their imaginations need to be stimulated. Their response to the charm of musical phrases, to the clearness and lucidity of the thought expressed, to the fitness of the unexpected and pleasing metaphors used, to the nice selection of the words employed to weave a garb of beauty for the message the hymn is intended to convey, can be and must be developed, if not only the proper appreciation of the hymns but also their highest efficiency as preachers are to be secured.

Few preachers realize the importance of this literary culture; yet, apart from his deity, Jesus Christ was the greatest literary man the race has developed. His parables, his similes, his aptness of phrase, his wit, his clearness of style, despite the great topics on which he discoursed, cannot be paralleled in any literature. The literary value of the Gospels is one of the reasons of their agelong and race-wide appeal.

The effort of the preacher to sensitize his mind and spirit, in order to appreciate what his hymnal offers, will give him more of the extraordinary winsomeness of his Master's style.

While not all hymns are distinctly literary in style and vocabulary, most of them have some poetical and imaginative qualities, and a great many of them have marked literary value. A careful canvass of these values will develop literary discrimination and taste. Hymns like Keble's "Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear" and Heber's "Brightest and best of the sons of the morning" must stimulate genuine literary appreciation. To segregate carefully in his mind the genuinely literary hymns—those that are full of imagination, symmetrical in structure, gracious in phraseology—will be a literary exercise of inestimable value.

*Development of Emotional Nature.* But the finest literary discrimination and the highest literary delight cannot be secured without an emotional responsiveness that ministers do not always bring to their reading of hymns. But this emotion must not simply be poetic, it must be spiritual, based on an actualization of the profound spiritual truths expressed in the hymns.

The most common fault among ministers is an aridity of mind, a dryness of feeling, a habit of abstract, academic thinking which have no response to the emotional values in the doctrines they preach. It is the secret of many an empty church, of many a barren pastorate.

To some men who lack emotional and poetic insight, the hymnbook may appear dry and uninteresting. It certainly is



unappealing to the unspiritual man, no matter how poetical he may be, and this will account for the occasional attack upon the hymns of the Christian Church as being without poetical power or merit. But the Christian minister, who deals with spiritual things, for whom the emotions of the human heart are a great opportunity, ought to find in the study of his hymnbook a great deepening of emotional intuition.

Here he comes in touch with the saints of the Church who have risen to the greatest heights of spiritual insight, and who have sung because the feelings within them were so impelling that they could not do otherwise than sing. His own deficient emotion and his own dull insight into spiritual truth are here inspired and stimulated until he too stands upon the mountaintop. For his own spiritual edification, therefore, there is nothing, outside the Bible, so likely to be of spiritual help as the hymnbook. When he is discouraged, its hymns of inspiration and encouragement cannot but lift the cloud. When his heart is dull, and his vision of his Lord obscured, such hymns as "Jesus, I love Thy charming name," by Philip Doddridge,

"Jesus, these eyes have never seen  
That radiant form of Thine,"

by our own Ray Palmer, or

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast,"

by that unknown saintly abbess of the Middle Ages, surely will once more set his spiritual pulses in motion and thrill him with the vitalizing vision of his Lord.

It is with this emotional attitude alone that a minister should study his hymns; otherwise, he will fail in realizing any of their values. To come to them coldly dissecting them with knife and scalpel is to miss their beauty, their spiritual appeal. The minister who prays over his sermon would do well to pray with equal fervency over the hymns he studies and selects. If he vitalizes them for himself, that fresh vision of

their meaning will reach the congregation directly and indirectly.

### III. THE PRACTICAL VALUES OF INDIVIDUAL HYMNS

Not the least important consideration in the study of hymns is clearly to envisage their several effective values. To know the literary worth and the spiritual stimulus of a given hymn is most desirable; but to realize what spiritual results it is fitted to secure, and how, is even more important. Each hymn has its individual force, its individual adaptation to definite mental and spiritual results; for the minister not to recognize these varying effects is like the failure of a physician to know the differing reactions of baking soda and strychnine. To announce "All hail the power of Jesus' name," when the situation calls for the tenderness of "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," is malpractice none the less that it is so frequently done.

*Classifying Hymns by Their Nature.* It will be helpful to classify hymns, deciding to which group each one belongs. Some are purely didactic, bearing instruction rather than emotion. Others are meditative, combining elements of instruction and personal experience. Another class expresses personal experience and the resultant emotion; such hymns may be tender or joyous or even exultant. Taking another step upward, we find hymns of inspiration and exhortation, fundamental expressions of faith and enthusiasm. Rising high above all the foregoing are the hymns of worship and adoration, thanksgiving and praise.

This is the primary process in evaluating the practical possibilities of hymns. It is in these pigeonholes of his memory that the minister finds the hymn called for by a given situation.

*Classifying Hymns by Their Fitness for Definite Purposes.* Then there is the classification of fitness for different purposes, organizing them according to the particular work each

is fitted to do. Some hymns are distinctly liturgical, fitting only into a solemn and stately service by the great congregation—e.g., Faber's "My God, how wonderful Thou art," Watts' "Before Jehovah's awful throne," or Tersteegen's "Lo, God is here: let us adore."

In a less formal class are Van Dyke's "Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee," Grant's "Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above," "Praise the Lord! ye heavens, adore Him," and many others in which rejoicing in the Lord takes a less majestic but none the less genuine form, fitting smaller assemblies and what without derogation may be called ordinary church services.

Hymns of still another class, represented by Robinson's "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing," Wesley's "O Love divine, how sweet Thou art," Keble's "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear," are still distinctly worshipful, but have an intimacy of communion in which tenderness and joy veil the sense of infinite majesty.

The foregoing classes of worshipful hymns are available for the regular services of the church, although some of them call for a preparation of the worshipers for their intelligent and sincere singing. They are helpful to devout people in their approach to the Triune God.

Jesus Christ is not only God in the fullest, truest sense; he is our Redeemer, our Mediator, our Sharer of the deeper experiences of the soul, our Comrade in the march of life, our intimate Friend in time and eternity. Hence, there are many hymns of praise and adoration of Jesus Christ that are elevated in mood, even majestic, like Wesley's "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing," Robinson's "Mighty God, while angels bless thee," Hammond's "Awake and sing the song," which will fit into the most exalted service of worship. There are many others like "Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature," Medley's "Oh, could I speak the matchless worth," Havergal's "O Saviour, precious Saviour," which are keyed a little lower, but are still most appropriate for an average church service.

In addition to these there are hymns of communion with Christ, of love for and delight in him, yea, even of intimate affection, like Caswall's "My God, I love Thee, not because," Newton's "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," Palmer's "My faith looks up to Thee," which are so fine in feeling, so heartfelt, so intimate, that they require preparation of the congregation before they can be sung sincerely. Some of them are so intense, like "I need Thee every hour," "My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine," and Palmer's "Jesus, these eyes have never seen," that their use seems limited to assemblies, small or large, entirely made up of earnest believers. Indeed, there are many of our intensest hymns of devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ that can be worthily sung only in prayer meetings where there is profound emotion to be expressed. Some of them cannot be sung by the general congregation except when the tide of religious fervor runs high.

Without further analysis, enough has been said to show that in the practical classification of hymns two major factors must be considered: the character, depth, and quality of the emotional burden of the hymn, and the character and the emotional responsiveness of the people who are expected to sing it. Ignorance of the former and lack of proper diagnosis of the latter will bring defeat to the minister who is depending on his hymns for help in securing spiritual results.

#### IV. THE MINUTE STUDY OF HYMNS

There can be no adequate knowledge of a hymn without a survey of the whole field of hymnology. It is necessary to understand the character and limitations of the hymn, to visualize its history and development, in order to secure its proper interpretation and use. It is unfortunate that too many ministers are satisfied with this general knowledge which is, after all, only a preparation for the study of the individual hymn. It is only in the individual hymn that the point of contact with practical results is reached. One may know all

about Isaac Watts and yet know so little of his great hymn "When I survey the wondrous cross" as to announce it at a church banquet before all the people are done eating! Imagine John, Peter, and the rest munching dried figs or dates as they stand before the cross on which their Master is dying!

Only as the individual hymns are fully understood as to their meaning, and as to the methods required to get that meaning transformed into experience and character, can hymnology become a practical force.

*Analysis of the Hymn.* 1. The first step is the investigation of its structure. The form of the stanza, the kind of measure used, the proper occurrence of accents, the schedule of rhymes all are important, controlling the music and the reading of the hymn.

The logical structure is even more important as governing the development of thought. Recognition of the relation of the several verses to the general plan of the hymn will reveal their individual value and prevent mutilation when circumstances demand omission of verses. This structure is more evident in didactic and homiletical hymns, of course, but the progress of thought usually lies near the surface. The doctrinal teachings should be clearly and explicitly thought out.

2. There is a logic of emotion more or less paralleling that of thought. There are ebb and flow of feeling, radical change of feeling, one feeling merging into another, that must be recognized. The climaxes of interest in the succeeding verses, rising higher and higher and culminating in the supreme climax of the last verse, should be noted that they may be expressed in the reading and the singing. This recognition of the emotional character of the hymn is absolutely essential to its real effectiveness. The hymn is fundamentally an expression of emotion, and only as such has it practical value.

3. After this general analysis of the structure and thought and of the general emotion of the hymn, there will need to

be a study of its detailed phrases. The minister ought to study it line by line and phrase by phrase. The Scriptural allusions need to be located and their connections noted. What did Charles Wesley mean in his great hymn, "Love divine, all loves excelling," by the phrase in the second verse, "the second rest"? Why did he pray "Finish, then, thy new creation"? <sup>3</sup> What is the Scriptural justification for the phrases of Newton's "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds"? <sup>4</sup> In Doddridge's "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve," what Biblical authority has he for "cloud of witnesses," or the ideas of "prize" and "race"? <sup>5</sup> What did Watts mean in the third verse of his "Not all the blood of beasts,"

"My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine,  
While like a penitent I stand  
And there confess my sin"?

Without the picture of the high priest laying his hands on the head of the scapegoat and confessing the sins of the people before sending it out into the wilderness (Lev. 16: 21), what meaning can these lines convey?

*The Background of the Hymn.* 1. The interpretation of the hymn cannot be complete without a recognition of the person who wrote it. His type of mind, his responsiveness to divine truth, his conception of the work of the Church, stamp themselves on the product of his pen. The personality of Watts, of Wesley, of Whittier, and of Faber interpret their several hymns.

Knowledge of the circumstances under which a given hymn was written will add to the value and correctness of the interpretation, by giving a sense of actuality to the thought and feeling expressed.

2. The age in which a hymn was written will be a large factor in its interpretation. The sheer objectiveness of the ancient hymns, the meditateness of the medieval hymns

stressing the sufferings of Christ on the cross, the worship character of the pre-Wesley hymns, including those of Watts, the warm, tender, experiential hymns of the Wesleyan Revival, all stamp their several hymns ineffaceably with their characteristics. "A mighty fortress is our God" bears the *stigmata* of the opening battles of the German Reformation. "Jesus, the very thought of Thee" is permeated by the peace and ardent piety of the Spanish nunnery whose devout abbess wrote the Latin original. "Stand up, stand up for Jesus" sounds the militant note of the great Philadelphia revival of 1857 and the Antislavery campaign that was so soon to drench the South with the noblest blood of both sections.

Watts' hymns must be analyzed in the light of the prevailing psalmody, of the religious aridity of his time, and of the formalism, not of the Established Church only, but of that of the Nonconformist societies as well. Wesley's hymns cannot be understood except as expressing the struggle between extreme worldly-mindedness, sensuality, and social decay outside of the Church, allied with the mere formalism and the cold and sheerly pharisaic morality within, on the one side, and the emphasis of conversion, profound religious experience, and aggressive evangelistic propaganda on the other. The objectivity and essentially liturgic spirit of Watts' hymns and the subjective warmth and the poetic glow of those of Charles Wesley immediately become full of meaning and historic vitality.

3. The greater hymns gather about themselves the noble associations of the many generations which have lived and died with their lines upon their lips. Would "Rock of Ages, cleft for me" or "Jesus, Lover of my soul," if written now, speedily win the place they now hold in our Christian hymnody? Would "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing" be widely sung, if it were not that in England and America it had been an impressive voice of worship in chapel and home, in stately church, and in mountain schoolhouse on the American fron-

tier? Lips now trembling with age lisped them in childhood; memories of father and mother, of thrilling religious experiences, when the very heavens seemed to open to the soul, cluster about them.

4. Only in this way can he secure a clear idea of what parts of a hymn will serve his immediate purpose, which lines and phrases will enrich his discourses or bring his points to an incandescent glow, or which verses when sung will assure the definite effect he has in mind. There may well be occasions when he will want his people to sing, not the first verse of Whittier's tender hymn, "We may not climb the heavenly steeps," but the second,

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet  
A present help is He;  
And faith has still its Olivet,  
And love its Galilee,"

or the even more comforting third verse,

"The healing of the seamless dress  
Is by our beds of pain;  
We touch him in life's throng and press,  
And we are whole again."

Such a study in interpretation will greatly enhance the spiritual values of the hymns to the minister himself, enriching mind and heart. It will make it possible for him to interpret them to his people. To any person the hymn is what he understands it to mean, no more; its effect on him is in due proportion to the completeness of his interpretation of it. The minister, therefore, is in duty bound to supply each singer in his congregation with an accurate and complete understanding of the hymns that are sung.

*Making a Hymnal of His Own.* The minister who has given his hymnal the study that has been suggested will wish to garner and organize the materials he has thus won. He will proceed to make a little hymnal of his own by selecting a



given number of the hymns that appeal to him—say one hundred—in his regular hymnal. This will constitute his inner hymnal to which from time to time he will make additions.

These hymns will be marked in his own copy of the church hymnal, a wide margined one, or an interleaved one, if it can be secured. As he analyzes each one, finding the joints in its structure, he will indicate the results by lines of division with the proper captions. His dissection of the phrases will disclose more or less obscure allusions needing explanation, like "Siloam's pool," "Mt. Nebo's lonely height," "Gog and Magog," "Ebenezer" and many others that convey no meaning to the average mind. These should be underlined for explanation. Some phrases are so suggestive, so packed with meaning, that their value eludes the ordinary singer—for instance, the second verse of Monsell's "My sins, my sins, my Saviour." These should be put in quotation marks to remind the preacher to unpack by spirited comment their wealth for the edification of his people.

Numbers referring to his card index or commonplace book will bring to mind helpful facts about the hymn, or its writer, or illustrations that will quicken both mind and heart. Enclosing a verse or verses in brackets will mark those that can be omitted without wrecking the symmetrical progress of the thought. That will eliminate the usual thoughtless phrase, "We will omit the third verse." If there is a choice of tunes, the most practicable one can be indicated; or a tune better known to the congregation elsewhere in the hymnal may be suggested with its number.

Verses to be read by the congregation, or to be sung by the choir or by a soloist, before being sung by the people may be starred. Changes of force, or speed, may be marked *p.* for soft singing, or *f.* for loud singing. A passage marked *rit.* will be retarded, or hurried if marked *accel.* A repeat sign, *bis*, after a verse will suggest that a verse may be profitably repeated. Scripture references will suggest passages that can

be used to emphasize the sentiment of the hymn, such as Genesis 28: 10-13, for the hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." *M* before a verse may mark it as a memory verse to be sung with closed hymnal. *P* may indicate that it is a prayer, to be sung before the long prayer. Dates connected with a hymn will show when it has been sung, and so prevent its unduly frequent repetition from mere force of habit. Every alert-minded minister will have methods and devices of his own that should be recorded in connection with the hymns so treated.

Such a hymnal, individual, practical, wealthy in resources, will be of incalculable value to the wide-awake, aggressive minister, rendering him independent of moods, of dull spirits, of disturbing environments. He needs but open his hymnal, a treasure house of practical suggestions, and his resources, immediately accessible and fully prepared, await his use.

A personal hymnal like this will not be made in a day or a month. Week by week, as hymns are selected, they are fully investigated and studied and their points recorded in the preacher's copy. His skimming of newspapers and magazines, his daily experiences, his hearing of addresses and sermons, his reading of history and literature, no less than his study of hymnological literature, will pay heavy tribute to such a royal treasury.

The books of hymnic material, pretty largely historical, are fairly numerous, and their help should not be despised, for they offer very useful illustrative matter. Robinson's *Annotations upon Popular Hymns* is not as up-to-date nor as scholarly exact as the later Duffield's *English Hymns*, or as Nutter and Tillet's *Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church*, but is richer anecdotally and more suggestive of expository comment. Dr. Benson's still later *Studies of Familiar Hymns*, Series I and II, will be found very rich in practical material. The present writer's *Practical Hymn Studies*<sup>8</sup> offers help most ministers need. The matter found in these and other like collec-

tions should be carefully sifted and recorded. A condensation of the selected items, particularly of the longer anecdotes, may be ample for all practical purposes.

Is it necessary to suggest again that all this varied material should be well organized in a loose-leaf blank book small enough to be carried about or, better yet, in a rebound, interleaved hymnal?

In making such a thorough study of as many hymns as he has leisure to analyze, the minister is really editing a hymnal of his own, none the less his own that it is embedded in the larger collection. There are very few preachers who do not have such an inner hymnal made up of the hymns they are in the habit of using; the pity is that it is frequently so small, so poorly selected, so unsymmetrical, so dependent on an unresponsive memory, and so lacking in the materials that would help to make the hymns effective.

*Memorizing Hymns.* A large number of hymns should be committed to memory for his own mental enrichment and comfort. It will enlarge his devotional vocabulary, his power of expression of spiritual things—nay more, increase the spontaneity and spirituality of his thinking and feeling, for memory lies nearer the springs of subconscious intuition and impulses than the printed word. A wealth of spiritual thought, of sanctified imagination, of vibrant religious feeling, of apt and expressive phrase and vocabulary, is provided by such a well-stocked memory.

The subconscious mind will furnish the fitting quotation, whether he writes his sermon or speaks *ex tempore*. In unexpected emergencies, when there is no time to leaf over the hymnal for a verse to be sung, the mind automatically supplies it. In personal work, in cheering the sick, in comforting those who mourn, in inspiring the lagging and discouraged ones, the apt quotation will be exceedingly effective. There are moments in a service, unexpected episodes of an emotional character, climaxes of feeling in a discourse, when a verse of a

hymn sung by the congregation will exceed in impressiveness any oratorical outburst; if the minister can trust his memory, he can carry the faltering memories of his people and realize an effect otherwise impossible, not only not losing any momentum, as he would if it were necessary to refer to the hymnal, but indefinitely increasing it. The great hymns of the Church should be made a part of his mental furniture, become a large share of his clerical working capital. He should not be satisfied to have less than a hundred hymns at his mental fingers' ends for efficient use at a moment's notice.

#### V. A STUDY OF METHODS OF USE

But it is not enough to gather the materials and study the individual hymns. A magazine of blasting powder has immense possibilities of power; but unless methods are invented for applying that power to desired ends, it is a liability and not an asset. Having learned all about hymns, the next study is how efficiently to use them, to organize the best methods of exploiting the social, mental, and spiritual values their singing offers.

*Using Hymns in Sermons.* Few ministers utilize the possibilities of apt Scripture quotations in their sermons; fewer still know how to draw on the treasures found in their hymnals to increase interest and intensify emotion. In many cases the very finest climax to a section of a sermon, or to the sermon itself, will be found in one or more verses of a hymn which brings the emotion of the theme to its high culmination. There is no lack of material; for the expression of every Christian doctrine that lends itself to lyric feeling there are intense and poignant phrases and lines steeped in transcendent emotion. Abstract truth has intellectual value of course, but has spiritual value only when transmuted into the gold of intense conviction in the heart of true believers. It is the genuine hymn that raises the temperature to the transmuting point, if properly introduced and emotionally used.

*Studying Responsiveness of the Congregation.* The intelligent preacher will study his congregation and its capacities of song to determine what he can do. He will canvass their responsiveness to certain classes of hymns, solemn, cheerful, aggressive, meditative, emotional, didactic—literary, popular. Their taste in the tunes to be used will need to be carefully considered. It would be folly to announce “When the Roll is Called up Yonder” in a congregation used to singing and enjoying Luther’s “Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott”; equally so to ask a congregation that enjoys singing “There’s sunshine in my soul” to sing Iron’s version of the “Dies Irae.”

A survey must needs be made of the musical resources and of the adaptability of musical helpers. In some cases such adaptability needs to be trained and developed. Their pliancy in rapidly taking up new methods, and executing unexpected plans of the preacher quickly, will require training.

*Studying Methods of Announcement and Securing Participation.* An important study will be how to announce and introduce the hymns in such a way as to awaken the interest and to win the sympathetic attention of the members of the congregation, and also how to help the people to sing with their minds and hearts, as well as with their vocal cords.

The methods to be used in securing full participation in the singing, without losing sight of the deeper meaning of the hymn, will need to be formulated or borrowed from successful leaders of song. The problem is not met by merely urgent demands that everybody sing; they must all be moved upon to want to sing. Can it be done by illustrations, by moving anecdotes, by tender appeals bearing on the thought and feeling of the hymn in hand? The kind of anecdotes and how they are to be used, before or during any given hymn, will call for careful discrimination. How shall the preacher acquire the power of introducing a hymn in a very few well-chosen words, vibrant with the feeling the hymn expresses, striking the spiritual key connecting up the hymn with the

religious purpose of the whole service? Year after year, by observation of other ministers and song leaders, by his reading, by experiments of his own, he will acquire a body of efficient methods with which to vitalize his song service.

*Studying Use of Hymnal for Specific Purposes.* This will include methods of using hymns for specific purposes. Is his congregation indifferent with regard to some particular line of work that he wishes to present—missions, for instance: what hymns, and methods of using them, will stimulate their minds and prepossess them for this as yet unappealing topic? Are they careless or irreverent in mood as they gather: can he sober their minds and awe their souls with a consciousness of God's actual presence with a solemn hymn and its impressive tune? How shall he use the singing of the hymns to affect and win the unsaved whom he plans to invite to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Master? In a thousand ways the intelligent and adroit minister can make his hymns count largely in accomplishing his beneficent purposes.

## VI. A STUDY OF THE TUNES

One of the most important lines of study will be that of the tunes to which the hymns are to be sung.<sup>7</sup> To use a botanical figure, a hymn will not bear fruit unless it is pollenized by a vital tune. Who would be even aware of Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," if it were not for Dykes' tune? Without Lowry and Doane's music what recognition would the modest lyrics of Fanny Crosby have won? Wesley's "Hark, the herald angels sing" owes the wideness of its Christmas use to Mendelssohn's tune. Tennyson's "Sunset and Evening Star" and "Sweet and Low" were brought to wide public attention by Barnby's two settings. Without the wings of melody few hymns would get very far in place or time. A mediocre hymn with a good singable tune will do vastly more good than a great hymn with an impracticable one.

Hence it is the minister's business to study the tunes. Not

the notes, not the harmony: he can leave them to his musical experts, if he has them. He must study the singability of the tune, its appeal to his particular people, its adaptation to the sentiment of the hymn with which it is associated. Its age, its traditional or conventional use, its style, its composer, its elaboration of harmony—all these are merely incidental. That it is singable, fitted to express and intensify the sentiment of the hymn, to give it access to the hearts of the congregation, to create the contagion of feeling in the assembly—these are the essentials of a good tune.

Just as the sales departments of our great manufacturing establishments make an intensive study of the psychology of salesmanship in all its phases, so the ministry of the church, in its schools of preparation and in its several organizations, should increase its efficiency as salesman of vital religion by a like study of the psychology of the hymn and of its use.

## *Chapter XX*

### THE PRACTICAL USE OF HYMNS

#### I. THE HYMN AS A MEANS TO AN END

WHILE our discussion attempts to consider every phase of the Christian hymn, its chief interest to us lies in it as a means to an end. It may be a work of literary art, the expression of a noble genius admirable in itself; it may be an interesting epitome of some noble doctrine that calls for appreciation of its lucidity and comprehensiveness; but for us its primary quality must be its adaptation to meet spiritual needs, in other words, its usefulness in religious work. In some way it must help in the work of the church, if it is to come within the sweep of our present horizon.

#### II. ANALYSIS OF PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF HYMNS

There are two values in the singing of hymns that must needs be taken into consideration: one is the sheerly musical or nervous value; the other is the message or burden of the hymn. The two must co-operate for the best results.

There are two lines of application in using hymns: the one is the expression and further intensification of an existent religious feeling; the other, the creation of religious interest or emotion where none exists. The two types of hymns must be clearly distinguished, if proper and efficient use is to be made of them.

The first type is worshipful, religiously emotional, based on



personal experience, tenderly meditative. The second is didactic, inspirational, or hortatory.

### III. THE USE OF HYMNS FOR CREATING RELIGIOUS INTEREST

In selecting hymns for the opening of a religious meeting, the existing nervous and emotional condition of the congregation is an important factor. That condition may be due to an unlimited number of influences. Are they gathering under the open sky, in a tent, in a rough tabernacle, or amid churchly surroundings? What is the character and background of the assembled people? In a distinctly unreligious environment, the crowd will be disorganized, in a nervous flutter, in a secular state of mind, more consciously interested in securing a desirable seat than in the purpose of the meeting. The people need to be psychically organized as a unit, need to have their attention concentrated on the occasion of the meeting, need to be brought into a religious state of mind. There is nothing better than the singing of a hymn to secure these very essential results. The unifying effect of common action, the nervous calming of the music, the religious suggestiveness of the hymn itself, all will co-operate in creating the proper attitude of mind.

What hymn shall we use to secure such a diversified result? Shall it be "My faith looks up to Thee," or "O Love that wilt not let me go"? They are both superexcellent hymns, but they would be utterly out of place. They belong to the first type, the expression of existent religious feeling; but there is little or no such feeling under the proposed circumstances. The people are not in a state of mind to sing them sincerely and earnestly. It would lead to the all too common hypocrisy of indifference.

Moreover, the tunes to these hymns are not of the organizing or stimulating type, fine as they are. They are tunes of ex-

pression of existing feeling, not of exhilaration or inspiration.

For such a miscellaneous crowd as has been described, a much less emotional hymn with a somewhat livelier tune is called for, such as "Blow ye the trumpet, blow," "Come, we that love the Lord," or "Onward, Christian soldiers." In most cases a lively Gospel song, such as "Sunshine in my soul," "Rescue the perishing," or even, in extreme cases, "Brighten the corner where you are" is more effective. The problem is not so much that of making a religious impression, as of preparing the people to receive a religious impression. To use tender, deeply emotional, profoundly spiritual hymns for such preliminary treatment is to flout psychology.

If the congregation meets in a church or other distinctly sacred edifice, the religious associations will simplify the problem. In part, at least, the secular attitude will have given place to a hospitality of mind for religious ideas and impressions. Under favorable circumstances the nervous strain will relax and religious susceptibilities will begin to function. These nervous and mental transformations of mood will be deepened by the organ prelude, if that has been wisely selected and effectively played.

In some conservative, devout congregations where solemn earnestness is the prevailing mood, and the bowed head on entering the pew is not a mere convention, the usual Doxology may be used after the call to worship; but usually an introit, such as "The Lord is in His holy temple" or "Oh, come, let us worship," sung by the choir, will be the wiser preparation for the preacher's invocation. The "Gloria Patri" should prepare the congregation for some solemn hymn of profound worship, such as "My God, how wonderful Thou art," or "Lord of all being, throned afar." By the time this is sung, the members of the congregation should be united in sympathy and responsiveness to the worshipful exercises that follow.

If the service is to be a joyous one, with an aggressive pur-

pose, the hymns should still be strictly worshipful, but more animated. "Come, sound His praise abroad," "Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above," or "Kingdoms and thrones to God belong" should be the unifying spiritualizing agency.

But if the social instincts are allowed to find expression as the people gather, and more or less furtive conversation and even gossip are heard, or worse yet, if the Sunday school has overflowed into the auditorium or, for lack of separate room, has occupied it, and the going out of the school and the coming in of the congregation make a confusion that submerges the hallowed associations of the place, a much more difficult problem is faced, and a more conscious effort must be made to prepare the people in mind and heart for the experience of the hour.

The prelude must be calculated to cover disturbing sounds and to call the people to order—an entirely different type of prelude from that used in the previous hypothetical situation. Once quiet and order are secured, the music may begin a quieter, more religious movement. But the high ecstasy of the Long Meter Doxology is out of the question. An earnest Call to Worship by the preacher, and a quiet sentence or introit by the choir, will hush the people's minds into sympathy with the invocation, that may possibly be somewhat longer and more earnest, which in turn will prepare them for a sincere and thoughtful participation in the "Gloria Patri." The wise and observant preacher will have been able to anticipate their state of mind and decide whether they are ready to sing with sincerity "O day of rest and gladness," "Safely through another week," or the more elevated "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," or "Before Jehovah's awful throne."

By the time this hymn is sung, the fate of the service has practically been settled. The people will have been won and are ready to go on to a deeper interest and to a fuller yielding of themselves to the influence of the service; or they are dull

and unresponsive, even somnolent, with an unconscious resentment that they have not been stirred and quickened. The failure of the service is assured, unless a miracle happens.

If the minister is a slave to the conventional order of service, that miracle will not happen. He may be so complacent over the smooth unfolding of the wonted numbers as not to recognize that the interest in the minds of his people has dropped.

In such a situation the best means to redeem it is a hymn with a profound appeal. But it cannot function, if it is used in the ordinary, conventional way. If the minister is alert and senses the stupor that is shadowing the minds of his people, and if the success of his service is more important to him than the mechanical regularity of the usual order of events, he can bring the miracle to pass by the use of the next hymn in an unexpected, thrilling way.

If the scheduled hymn does not lend itself to his purpose, he can exercise the audacity without which no public man can hope to succeed, by changing it to one that will, and by that act will storm the first defense of Morpheus, the god of sleep. Of course, he will always keep in mind practical considerations of teamwork with his musical helpers, taking enough time in introducing the substituted hymn in an interesting way to enable them to find it and decide to what tune it is to be sung. Usually that takes but a moment. Announcing the hymn, he will explain the message of the hymn in doctrine or in feeling, as a preliminary to its intelligent and sympathetic singing; or he may make emotional comment, or relate a fitting anecdote that will grip the feelings, leaving historical data for some other occasion; or he may ask the congregation to join him in silent prayer for divine guidance into the heart of the hymn to be sung; or he may ask his people to read the first verse in concert, in order that they may sing it with more intelligence; or if he has a sympathetic soloist, he can ask him or her to sing a verse, letting the people sing the rest of the hymn.

If the people are submerged in indifference and stupor, he may treat the whole hymn in like fashion, verse by verse, always careful to make his few words count, for prolixity will defeat his purpose. He will be even more careful that there shall be a *crescendo* movement of increasing impressiveness and deepening feeling.

Such a jolt to the passive attitude of an unresponsive people, genially administered in a confident manner, and with sincere feeling, will waken the most indifferent congregation and avert the impending defeat. It will make the frequent use of such unusual methods unnecessary by creating a latent expectation of the unexpected.

Fortunate is the minister who has a native sensitiveness to the tides of feeling that ebb and flow in his congregation, to whom the faces and attitudes of his people are an open book. Most ministers must develop such a power by keen and persistent observation and by intelligent experimentation. This psychical *en rapport* is very important to the minister. As well might an organist play without hearing his instrument as for a minister to be ignorant of the states of feeling of his congregation. He is a blind man trying to paint a picture.

Some ministers think themselves lacking in magnetism, in sensitiveness to outside influences, and make no effort to develop their latent powers. This inferiority complex is wrong; the very sense of limitation is a proof that the capacity for it exists. It is too essential to the largest success that a man should not use every possible effort and method to develop it.

#### IV. THE HYMN AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHING TRUTH

Another practical use of the hymn that will prove very valuable is to make those hymns that are didactic or meditative the occasion of discussing for a few minutes the doctrines they express, and so to teach, to bring back to memory, or to vitalize the articles of their faith which average Christians are apt to

forget. There are Christian beliefs that do not call for elaborate discussion in a sermon, that are best impressed by emotional treatment in connection with a hymn. "Depth of mercy! can there be," with a background of pure-minded Charles Wesley's consciousness of sin, will give an opportunity of impressing the people with sin's subtle and soul-destroying power. "There is a fountain filled with blood" will be the basis of a very short but a clear and tender exposition of the atonement made for sin by Christ on the cross. That a person may be conscious of salvation, of acceptance by God through Jesus Christ, will find fitting explanation in an exposition of "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." What better opportunity for emphasizing the Christian's dependence on Christ could be afforded than a study of "Jesus, Lover of my soul"? Our inability to understand the ways of God's providences, and our need of a faith that does not demand explanations, may well be stressed in an analysis of "God moves in a mysterious way." A score of such hymn discussions at irregular intervals during the year would prove illuminating, and help to remove the haze that prevents clear definition in the minds of the people of the doctrines on which their spiritual life must rest. Singing the hymn after such comments will make it more effective and fasten the Christian teachings in the minds of the hearers with links of steel.

#### V. HYMN SERMONS AND HYMN SERVICES

The versatile and adaptable preacher, full of resources, quick to take advantage of unusual methods, will find the Song Sermon, or rather the Hymn Sermon, a most attractive and impressive way of using hymns. Instead of finding an appropriate proof text from the Scriptures for each leading point of the discourse, search out a hymn, or a single verse, expressing it in a lucid and emotional way and have it sung by the congregation, by the choir, or by a soloist. Comment on the hymn and its illustration, consonant with the development

of the general theme, will supply a new line of most interesting materials. Care must be taken not to let the hymn hem the momentum of the sermon, but to make it add to the tide of interest. There will be no time for playing the tune or to find the hymn, while the preacher is silently waiting. Close connection and sharp attack are absolutely essential. Such a sermon will be sure to win a great hearing.<sup>1</sup>

A less formal use of hymns may be made in the Song (or Hymn) Service in which eight or ten hymns with historical, illustrative, and devotional comment are sung by soloists, choir, and congregation. Less valuable in formal teaching than the Hymn Sermon, it will probably win larger popular acceptance. Such a religious service should not be allowed to degenerate into merely a Sacred Concert.

## VI. THE USE OF HYMNS IN EMERGENCIES

There are occasional disturbing and disorganizing occurrences during services—a violent storm, a noisy epileptic, a fanatical intruder, a fire where a panic would be disastrous—when it is important to keep the disturbance down to a minimum, or even to control the congregation. The singing of an efficient hymn is often the solution of the problem when there is a leader of presence of mind (preferably the minister) who will promptly start it. It must be a hymn that everybody knows; it must not be a tender, experiential hymn, but one with a stirring spirit to a stimulating tune that everybody can sing, such as "Onward, Christian soldiers."<sup>2</sup>

Such occasions sometimes suggest fitting hymns that turn what might have been disaster into a spiritual victory. In such a case there must be a peculiar fitness to the difficulty, an adaptation to the form it takes. In case of a death, or paralytic stroke, the hymn will not be loud, but tender like "Rock of Ages," "He Leadeth Me," or "The Sweet By and By." Softly sung, the episode will be turned from a shock into a deep spiritual impression.

## ~~~~~Chapter XXI~~~~~

### THE SELECTION OF HYMNS

#### I. SELECTION SHOULD SECURE UNITY OF SERVICE

NEXT in importance to the minister's selection of his text comes the selection of his hymns. If he has a clear conception of the real unity of his service, it will appear in this more than in anything else.

*Narrow Conception of Unity.* If the minister is a narrow, mechanically-minded man, with a sense of the need of mere logical unity, he will make the subject of his sermon the governing consideration in all parts of his service. The hymns will needs be all or nearly all didactic, the type with the least emotional or inspiring value.

The early hymns of the service will in an ineffective way anticipate the points of his discourse and, in so far as they have effectiveness, weaken by their more lucid and concise statement the discussion in the sermon. As the congregation usually does not know what the topic of the discourse is to be, the pertinency of the selection is not evident. The same is true of the Scripture lesson, if it is read before the long prayer. Logically the whole basis of selection is absurd.

*Broader Conception of Unity.* The sermon is simply a co-ordinate part of divine service, not its governing feature to which all things else must be subordinated. The early hymns should not be selected with reference to the theme of the sermon; the last hymn should sum up not so much the ideas of the sermon as its emotional values.



*Unity Based on Purpose.* Among heathen people instruction must be the leading purpose of any meeting held for their benefit; but among well-taught Christian people, the chief purpose should be worship, to which the sermon should be simply one of several aids. The hymns should be emotional, worshipful, and not exclusively didactic, and should harmonize with the sermon by being subordinated, with the sermon, to the clearly-conceived worshipful purpose of the entire service. Dr. Austin Phelps, more than three-fourths of a century ago, enunciated the right policy: "It aims at unity of worship, not by sameness of theme, but by resemblance of spirit. It would have a sermon preceded and followed, not necessarily by a hymn on the identical subject, but by a hymn on a kindred subject, pertaining to the same group of thought, lying in the same perspective, and enkindling the same class of emotions." To announce the theme of the coming sermon in the first hymn, to read a Scriptural passage as a basis for it, to grope around that theme in the prayer, to emphasize another phase in the second hymn, is a case of professional egotism so flagrant that its only shocking mitigation is that it is the accepted clerical estimate of the situation.

Now every service, of whatever form or character, is properly intended to bring the soul into conscious relation with God. Every phase of the soul's activities is to be brought under the influence of this dominating purpose. As it cannot comprehend God in His completeness at any one moment, different attributes of His nature and the varied relation of these several attributes to manifold human needs furnish an endless abundance of worshipful themes. They will appeal to the understanding through the truth, to the heart through an emotional realization of that truth, and to the will by the choices offered to the soul's supreme tribunal. Here, then, in this clearly-conceived phase of worshipful attitude, you find the basis for the logical unity of the service—a living unity that moves heart and will as well as reason.

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There is in this no fetter to the intellectual activity of the preacher, but rather a fresh stimulus and source of suggestion. It brings to bear vital forces within the speaker's own soul that too often find little exercise, and changes the emotional elements of the service, the prayer, and the music—now too often mere haphazard, characterless excrescences—into definite sources of power for the realization of the desired spiritual results.

A preacher whose heart is a barometer of the spiritual condition of his people has no difficulty in finding subjects and texts for his sermons. If the needs of his people press upon him, those needs furnish an arc light that illuminates the Bible, and a suggestiveness that brings him an embarrassment of homiletical riches. Given a clear recognition of a definite immediate need and the consequent definite purpose, it will not only make sermonizing easy but will control the rest of the service. Not the theme of the sermon, but the purpose of the service as a whole, will be the organizing vitality.

### II. SUGGESTIVE SELECTIONS OF HYMNS

Here is an earnest pastor who is impressed with the growing materialism, or worldliness, of his people. How shall he best dredge the stagnant shallows of their souls? He decides, not upon a single sermon, but upon a series of services with cumulative power, whose whole outlook shall be upon the Person and Character of God as the basis of his claims upon his creatures. There will be sermons upon these high themes of course, but they will call for noble and elevated co-ordinate co-operation in the rest of the service. Now these sermons should all be peculiarly worshipful, but that worship will be set to different keys.

*Hymns for Service on God's Omnipotence.* The sermon on the Divine Omnipotence calls for a noble enthusiasm. The hymns should be majestic and joyful. After profoundly

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worshipful preliminary exercises it will not be wise to sing Watts' hymn,

"Let all the earth their voices raise,  
To sing the great Jehovah's praise,  
And bless His holy name,"

to the tune "Ariel" for the first hymn in spite of its appropriateness of thought: first, because it is not sufficiently elevated, and secondly, because the tune is too light. Watts' more majestic hymn,

"Before Jehovah's awful throne,  
Ye nations bow with sacred joy,"

sung to "Old Hundredth," would be more harmonious with the general purpose of the service. By the time the second hymn is reached there must be some exhilaration of spirit. It will not be desirable therefore to select

"All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice";

first, because it is in exactly the same key of feeling as the previous hymn; second, because for that reason no tune is quite so fitting to it as "Old Hundredth," which is already provided for; and third, because the presumable intensifying of feeling by this time calls for a brighter text and more spirited music. But it must be a hymn of worship, none the less; we choose, therefore,

"Oh, worship the King, all-glorious above;  
Oh, gratefully sing His power and His love,"

the interrupted dactylic measure and triple time tune giving both dignity and movement.

If the prelude was a joyfully majestic composition, the anthem one of elevated praise—e.g., a "Venite" or a "Jubilate"—the responsive reading and the choir responses reverent and worshipful, the long prayer of the preacher exalted with

genuine adoration (forgetful of the routine catalogue of petty petitions), and the Scripture passage noble with inspiring truth, the service might close at this point as having already realized its prime object of worship. There must have been something radically wrong in the spirit and management of it, if the preacher does not find his people responsive and himself inspiringly attuned to his noble theme. At the close of his discourse on the Divine Omnipotence, his people will presumably be ready to sing

"Let all on earth their voices raise,  
To sing the great' Jehovah's praise,  
And bless His holy name."

to the exhilarating movement of the tune "Ariel." The organist's postlude will be characterized by a joyful solemnity, some strong *maestoso* movement.

*Hymns for Service on God's Love.* A service devoted to the worship of God, as manifested in His love, offers a wider range of possibilities. Is it the love manifested in the atonement? there may be the somber element of the crucifixion combined with its nobly elevated aspects; is it the love manifested to His children? there will be a chastened ecstasy in the hymns and prayers; is it the love that consoles and comforts? there will be the tender and sympathetic development of the theme—each will call for its own selection of hymns. As the last is perhaps the most difficult, let us see what program we should prepare for it.

a. Tender Service.

The organ prelude will be soft, sweet music, full of chromatic chords that melt one into the other, or a tender, emotional melody with soft accompaniment. The usual opening doxology will give way to an introit, sung very gently by the choir, set to a text expressing divine sympathy or a prayer for help. The invocation will be a plea for God's manifest presence among His needy people. The first hymn sung by the congregation will sustain the feeling already established,

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“Lord, we come before Thee now,  
At Thy feet we humbly bow,”

sung to the tune “Aletta” or “Pleyel’s Hymn.” The responsive reading may be the forty-second and forty-third Psalms. The choir, having been advised in good time what was desired, sings some sympathetic setting of the twenty-third Psalm, or of the forty-second Psalm, or of the hymn “Just as I am.” If the preacher has kept step in his heart with the emotional progress of his service, the long prayer will be an expression of the need of the people and of a tender appreciation of God’s loving sympathy, closing with an ascription of praise to His limitless love. The people ought now to be ready to sing

“Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven, to earth come down.”

After the discourse, a hymn in direct didactic relation to it may be sung in a bright and joyous spirit:

“God is love; His mercy brightens  
All the path in which we rove.”

The postlude will be tenderly joyous and sympathetic in style.

There are many preachers whose nervous organizations would not enable them to adjust themselves to so tender an emotional key in developing the service. On the other hand, many congregations would not follow it, but would be lulled to sleep by it.

#### *b. Joyful Service.*

They would be entirely right in selecting as the opening hymn one of general praise and worship:

“Come, Thou Almighty King,  
Help us Thy name to sing,  
Help us to praise”;

or even the quietly majestic hymn,

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.”

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The second hymn may be more prayerful and tender:

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land,”

or

“When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys.”

The final hymn may be more didactic:

“God is the refuge of His saints,  
When storms of sharp distress invade”;

or the more stirring and forceful

“Give to the winds thy fears;  
Hope, and be undismayed”;

or that wonderful paean of faith in the divine love and providence,

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word.”

In this case the postlude will be bright and joyous, preferably with some soft and tender episodic passages.

*Hymns for a Missionary Service.* The preacher plans a missionary discourse: what is his order of service to be?

That means an aggressive, spiritual program whose purpose is stimulation of enthusiasm, of courage, of conquering faith, of bold decision.

The organist will be asked to play a bright prelude with pronounced but dignified rhythm, and striking harmonic progressions. The anthem by the choir may be based on some text of praise from the Psalms with stirring, somewhat rhythmical music that will stimulate the nerves of the people rather than soothe them. The responsive reading should be a Psalm of triumph, say the ninety-sixth. The long prayer for once may drop out of the omnibus conventionality and lead

the people in magnifying the irresistible power and the conquering love of God, with enough reference to current sorrows in the congregation to serve as a contrast, to make the realization of the strong right arm of God more vivid.

The hymns should be in keeping with this joyous recognition of God's invincibility and assured triumph.

The first hymn may be Charles Wesley's "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing." This is worship—mingled with faith and with aggressive purpose, it is true, but nevertheless distinctly worship.

An equally appropriate selection from Charles Wesley would be "Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim." Care should be taken that the tune used for either is vigorous and well known. A dull tune for either would be a stumble on the threshold of the service.

The point in the service has not yet been reached where a distinctly missionary hymn is called for; aggressiveness in the Lord's service is still the mood to be created. There would be a choice between Shurtleff's vigorous "Lead on, O King Eternal," with its specific dedication of self to any forward movement of the Christian Church, or Baring-Gould's marching hymn with its American tune written by an English composer, "Onward, Christian soldiers," which can hardly fail to stimulate the pulses of a presumably already stirred congregation, unless it is sung in a drawling, unaccented way.

If by this time the congregation is not prepared to be thrilled by an unexpected missionary sermon, eloquent with an appeal hardly to be equaled by any other topic connected with the Church's activities, there has been something wrong with the preacher or his people.

At the close of the sermon the hearts of the people will be glad to express themselves either in Smith's "The morning light is breaking," or in Watts' noble Christianized version of the seventy-second Psalm, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun." For once the organist can pull out all his stops and

play a brilliant but not flippant postlude without disturbing the mind and nerves of thoughtful and devout people.

In these suggested programs it has been evident that the unity is one of feeling and not of logic. This gave room for the interest which the unexpected supplies. There must be progress of feeling as well as of thought. The long prayer or the music after it, be it organ or choir or hymn, should be the climax of emotion. It should be allowed to subside a little during the announcements and offering, in order to rise to a still higher climax in the sermon and closing hymn.

In a tender, sympathetic service there is more danger of not taking the audience with you. If the music and the feelings suggested by the hymns are too quiet and depressing, there is danger of its acting as a lullaby, putting the people to sleep. Many a preacher wonders why some of his hearers are asleep before his text is fairly announced. In nine cases out of ten, it is due to the depressing character of the music used in the devotional part of the service.

### III. IMPORTANCE OF THE TUNES

As has been incidentally suggested in the course of the illustrative progress, no small importance is to be attached to the selection of the tunes to be used with the hymns. The preacher cannot always afford to trust the compiler of the hymnal which he uses. That learned gentleman does not know what tune the preacher's people can sing with a given hymn to the best advantage. He has to meet the difficulty of providing every hymn with an appropriate tune without having well-known and effective tunes enough to go round; he cannot repeat them over and over, but must use less popular tunes. Who shall judge him harshly, therefore, if in this dilemma he occasionally follows his own personal taste rather than the vaguely conceived needs of miscellaneous congregations.

But the minister must study the tunes in his hymnal lest



he limit his song service to the small number he happens to know well. To use a dozen or so tunes again and again will cut the nerve of musical interest in his musical helpers and in his congregation as well.

Hence, it is the minister's task to re-edit the hymnal in part, remating hymns and tunes in order to secure the greatest results with his own people. Nor need he suffer with a sense of presumption. The important consideration is the results of the singing of hymns in an effective way, not loyalty to his church hymnal at the expense of those results.

## ~~~~~Chapter XXII~~~~~

### THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND TREATMENT OF HYMNS

#### I. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HYMNS

It may seem quite superfluous to give any attention to the mere announcement of hymns; but in many cases the spiritual success or failure of the congregational song is determined there. It is generally assumed that any one can announce a hymn and initiate its singing, but probably the least successful work of ninety-nine out of a hundred ministers is their management of the service of song in their churches. The writer remembers one minister who would baldly announce the number and then turn round and stare at the choir and organist until they began to sing. The awkwardness and helplessness of the man invariably produced a most unfortunate effect upon the congregation. Many ministers announce the number and read the first line. It makes no difference whether the first line is complete in meaning or not; they have identified the hymn.

Like a great many others of their professional brethren, they used the hymn perfunctorily as a traditionally necessary part of the service, with which they really had little or nothing to do; that it has any relation to the needs or the objects they have in view for the service does not occur to them. The unpardonableness of an aimless sermon need not be emphasized, but why should it be easier to forgive a preacher for aimlessly selecting and announcing hymns?

## *THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND TREATMENT OF HYMNS*

Many churches have hymn boards and even bulletins, making the mechanical interruption caused by the preacher's announcement of the numbers unnecessary. The people presumably have found the hymn by the time the tune is played through.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, if these devices for announcing the hymn are absent, the preacher must announce the number. If he does so in a listless, mechanical way, he will unconsciously give the congregation an unfortunate emotional keynote, and, in turn, it will sing in a listless, mechanical way. The psychical and emotional value of the singing of the hymn is already discounted. If it has been announced in a joyous, or, at least, in an interested spirit, with only a happy phrase or two, giving a cue to the spirit in which it is to be sung, the congregation will respond in kind. Twenty seconds of effective introduction will make the difference between success and failure.

It should be emphasized that a live preacher will not allow the regular order of service to prevent needed comment on the hymn as it is needed. The order of service has advantages, but if it robs the preacher of freedom and spontaneity, it becomes a curse. Too rigidly followed it makes for dullness and boredom. The congregation should not be allowed to feel that any departure from it is a doubtful liberty on the part of the preacher. Opportunity should be made to dispel any such idea.

If a hymn is curtly announced, or courteously suggested with a "please" or a "kindly" (as if to sing it were a special favor to the preacher), and if no hint is given as to the message to be conveyed, or as to the feeling which is to be expressed, how can the minister hope that the merely improvised singing of an unexpected hymn, perhaps with an unknown tune, will have any stimulating, not to say spiritual, value? If the hymn is well known, it is probably a great hymn, and what gathering of saints can rise at a moment's notice to its spiritual altitude?

What intelligent minister would presume suddenly to ask a trained elocutionist to read to his audience a poem he had never before seen? Or what honest lawyer would ask a client to sign a legal paper involving obligations without explanations or previous reading? Yet, every Sunday, congregations are asked to sing hymns they have never noticed, expressing they know not what sentiments, promises, or consecrations, in the most solemn and exalted manner. Is it ethical? Is it efficient?

## II. THE TREATMENT OF HYMNS

If a congregation is to sing a hymn, not thoughtlessly and mechanically, but intelligently and with feeling, it must be prepared for the devout exercise. It is the minister's task to tune his people up for the individual hymn, and create the habit of finding meaning and genuine feeling in all the hymns they sing. Stupid singing is a habit: why not create a habit of singing thoughtfully and feelingly?

That may be done; but it cannot be done overnight. It will call for persistent training, for a wealth of resources, and for an unbroken attitude of genuineness of emotion on the part of the preacher. It is no small undertaking to transform sleepy church members into sons of praise.

We may add to the obligations involved still another. If the hymn to be sung is not merely didactic or meditative, but distinctly emotional in character, is it not the preacher's duty to create in those who are to sing at least the beginnings of the emotions he asks them to voice?

A rapid sketch of blind Matheson's experience before writing "O Love that wilt not let me go" will set the heartstrings of the congregation quivering in the emotional key of the hymn. A vivid picture of the death of Christ on the cross in a dozen sentences will inspire a preacher's people to sing "Beneath the cross of Jesus" with genuine emotion. Drawing a picture with rapid touches of the charge of the Light Brig-

ade as it went to its death at Balaklava, and quoting a few lines of Tennyson's poem, will stir the pulses for the singing of "Lead on, O King Eternal." "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire" may be introduced by a few tender sentences on the vital necessity of prayer to a sincere Christian. A minute's resume of the influence of the cross of Christ on an individual life, or on the upward sweep of the human race under its influence, will give the people a clue to "In the cross of Christ I glory." The tender aspect of the atonement made by Christ for sin may be solemnly suggested before singing "Alas, and did my Saviour bleed?"

Where a hymn has allusions not likely to be recognized by the average singer, they ought to be made plain. How many of the millions who have sung the well-known hymn, "Come, thou Fount of every blessing," knew what the word "Ebenezer" signified? Striking phrases, packed with deep thought and feeling, like Matheson's

"I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be,"

should have their treasures brought to light, lest the average churchgoer should overlook them. In other words, there should be a rapid exposition of unusual and also of over-familiar hymns, so that the congregation may sing with its mind and heart.

The range of possible comment is so wide, and the opportunity of using it is so limited, that only the most striking and impressive illustrations should be considered for actual use. Rhetorical and anecdotal illustrations should be used sparingly—only when they promote an exalted and distinctly spiritual state of mind. They are apt to be prolix, to distract the mind from spiritual contemplation. They are permissible with joyous, aggressive, victorious hymns rather than with those that are tender, emotional, subjective.

The inexorable limitations of time must always be borne in mind. When a hymn is announced the people expect to sing, not to listen to a hymnological dissertation or to a long-winded anecdote. The simile or metaphor, or other oratorical comment, must explode with a very short fuse of preliminary remark. The anecdote must be compact, shorn of unessential preface or background, and reach its peak of interest, or of appeal to feeling, with the succinctness of an epigram. Better limit the illustrations and comments to those that can gracefully and lucidly be uttered in one or rarely two minutes.

Discussions and illustrations of hymns are often confined to the hymns as hymns, which is rarely necessary. It is not the hymn that needs emphasis, much less its writer: it is the message, the burden, the feeling of the hymn that is to be enforced. An instance of the saving of a "down and outer" from the Jerry McAuley mission in New York, or the Pacific Garden mission in Chicago, will create more responsiveness to "Rescue the Perishing" than biographical facts about Fanny Crosby or about the composer, W. Howard Doane. The anecdote of missionary success from the last missionary bulletin or magazine will lead a congregation to sing "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun" more enthusiastically than an explanation of Watts' having metricized the seventy-second Psalm with a free hand, making the Jew, David, sing like a Christian. Illustrating the sense rather than the form of the hymn will be found very much more thrilling to the people.

In evening services of song, or in midweek lectures, historical backgrounds will be very helpful and interesting. A series of lectures on the great hymns of the Church, or even a general survey of the development of our Christian hymnody, will lay the foundations of a more intelligent song.

In such services, anecdotal illustrations may have a large place. They need not be emotional under such circumstances, just so they add interest and understanding.

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND TREATMENT OF HYMNS

As an occasional variation in the introduction of the hymn, why not have the congregation read it? "It is not done?" All the more reason for doing it! They will get more actual values out of the reading of the hymn and its subsequent singing than in any other way; the very unusualness of the method will give additional effectiveness. Single stanzas can be most impressively treated in this manner. In singing Isaac Watts' great hymn, "When I survey the wondrous cross," ask the people to read the third verse softly,

"See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

and then sing it very softly and note the effect.

The same method may be used with Mrs. Alexander's children's hymn, "There is a green hill far away," which adults have adopted for their own; have them read the last verse,

"Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved,  
And we must love Him too,  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do,"

and then sing it quite emotionally.

A great many people deprecate the minister's reading of the hymns. But that is because so few ministers are able to read hymns with any degree of impressiveness or reality. Perhaps half the ministers who read them leave no desirable impression whatever as the result, for the reading has been without even a thoughtful sense of the meaning of the hymn, much less of its emotional force. To allow one's voice to fall at the end of every line, or to make a habit of having a rising inflection at the end of each first line and a falling at the end of each second, without variation, is so vile, from an elocutionary standpoint, that one cannot wonder that the general congregation prefers its omission.

On the other hand, if the minister's mind and heart are profoundly awake to the thought and feeling of the hymn that is to be used, if the minister has a definite purpose which he wishes to realize through the singing of that hymn, if the whole song service is thoroughly vital and earnest, he cannot help reading the hymn in such a way as to impress and interest his people. One need not be a well-trained elocutionist to do this. The genuine feeling will develop a natural elocution and will even neutralize faulty habits and mannerisms of reading that would otherwise make it unendurable.

The fact that the hymn is a familiar one may be only an additional reason for reading it, instead of being an imperative reason for omitting its reading. As coins long in circulation often lose their superscription, these familiar words often lose their meaning and reality by constant use, and these may be restored by intelligent and emotional reading.

A mere habit of reading a hymn through is sheer mechanism, the fatal enemy of interest. The situation, the purpose in view, the character of the service and the time allotted to it, even the preacher's own passing mood—all are factors that need to be considered.

At this point it is well to drop a word of warning against the unintelligent omission of verses. Some ministers invariably restrict the number to be sung to three or four. If there are five verses, they invariably omit the fourth, or announce, "We will sing the first three verses," no matter what the development of thought may be. One of the most painful manifestations of ministerial thoughtlessness and indifference to the congregation's share of the service, is this brutal mutilation of the hymns. The preacher wishes a little more time for his sermon, so he robs God and his people of some of their worship by singing the pitiful remains of a hymn he has deprived of its unity, its progress of thought, and perhaps of its best stanzas. Or he has preached too long and closes with a single verse of some great hymn, unwittingly losing the best climax



his sermon could have had. Because of the same egotism and his obsequious regard for the tyranny of the dinner hour, he cuts out the reading and proper introductions of his hymns throughout the service.

The irony of the situation is that by this neglect of his hymns the preacher fails to create the enthusiasm and responsiveness of his hearers essential to the larger success of his sermon. "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. 11: 24.)

It may well be that some of the ministers who read this practical section will throw up their hands at the idea of working out the rather daunting array of suggestions for exploiting the hymn in their church work. The pastor's task is such a varied one, with such a mass of details, all of seeming importance, that he is in danger of wasting time on comparative trifles, of "puttering" around, feeling very busy while accomplishing little. A common remark at the close of the day is, "I've been busy as a nailer all day and can't see that I have accomplished anything!"

It is this time that is lost by lack of concentration which could quite comfortably be devoted to hymnological studies. The difficulty in most cases is not lack of time, but lack of interest, lack of realization as to how great a contribution the hymn service can make to the success of his work.

God has put into the throat of every member of this preacher's congregation a marvelous musical instrument with a wide range of tones and of extremely appealing cadences, of great power to express the emotions of the heart of the singer, and to suggest and stimulate the feelings of the minds and hearts of the hearers: is the minister justified in neglecting the opportunity it offers to arouse and quicken the mental and spiritual natures of the people for whose religious life he is responsible?

Is it not a crying piece of egotism, in view of the proven efficiency of hymn singing, to depend exclusively on his own

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preaching for the realization of the spiritual ends to which his life is devoted? When ministers realize the positive power the hymn service can exert, they will not begrudge the occasional hours for studying and planning it which are necessary to its full success. That success will create

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## EPILOGUE

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.* Eccl. 12: 7.

In traversing the long history of the human use of song in religious services, rites, and ceremonies, we have found that

1. The hymn has been recognized in every age, in every generation, by every race, whether savage or cultured, under every sky, as an expression of religious emotion, and as the generator of such emotion.

2. Religious emotions are of various types. It may be the earnestness of strong conviction; it may be the hot indignation against sin and evil, against neglect of the soul's highest obligations. It may be the depressing sense of conscious unworthiness, rising into repentance for sin, into the tenderness of grateful recognition of the divine love and forgiving grace, expressed in tears, joy over the assurance of salvation expressed in beaming countenance or in ejaculations of delight, or even in shouts of victory. The human heart becomes an Æolian harp from which the winds of the Spirit of God evoke an infinitude of melodies, grave and solemn, tender and sweet, joyous and triumphant, or vigorous and inspiring,—a very symphonic orchestra.

3. As an expression of religious emotion the hymn has been effective in moving the human will, stubborn in its revolt against God, by intensifying the mental and spiritual power of religious ideas.

4. The religious idea is primary, of course, but its emotional response in the heart gives it vitality. It is the team of

idea and its normal emotion that exerts the power of the hymn. An abstract idea, abstract because its emotional reflex has been abstracted, has no motive power.

5. In the effective use of the hymn the clear apprehension of its ideas must be enforced by the vital reproduction of the original emotion of its writer which urged its composure. A dry hymn written without vitalizing feeling has no power to inspire; it gives no sense of reality. Dry sermons, not pollinated by emotional vigor, can bear no fruit. The effectiveness of sermon or hymn will be determined by the intensity of the feeling behind it.

6. The emotional appeal must be genuine, both writer and singer must be sincere. Artificial emotion, the mere pretense of a feeling that does not exist, has no power. It is not merely unappealing, it is offensive.

7. But emotion necessarily implies an intelligence and a susceptibility to be moved—in other words, a personality. It also implies that one person's feelings can call forth like emotions in other persons. The merely outward expression may even create a like emotion among others who do not fully apprehend the primary idea that set the original emotion to vibrating, creating a very contagion of feeling.

8. It follows that in actual aggressive work, largely depending on emotional transmission, the minister or the leader must supply the initiating impulse. If the minister has a dry mind—there are ministers who desiccate every topic they discuss—religious ideas suffer a blight of aridity, killing all sense of reality, this sense of reality being the *sine qua non* of all spiritual effectiveness. If he is fortunate in having a vivid imagination and a heart responsive to religious truth, he can multiply his mental gifts twentyfold by intensifying the truths he expresses.

9. Treated in this way, the hymn becomes the peer of the sermon in influencing power, and assures the minister eager for spiritual results a large harvest of souls, saved and spiritualized.

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## REFERENCES AND NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

- 1 Genesis 4: 21, 23.
- 2 Genesis 31: 27.
- 3 Exodus 15: 1-21.
- 4 Numbers 21: 16, 17.
- 5 Psalm 90.
- 6 Joshua 6: 16.
- 7 Judges 5: 1-31.
- 8 I Samuel 2: 1-16.
- 9 I Samuel 10: 5.
- 10 I Chronicles 9: 22; 11: 4, 5.
- 11 Mark 14: 26.
- 12 Acts 16: 25.
- 13 Colossians 3: 16.
- 14 James 5: 13.
- 15 Revelation 5: 9; 7: 9-12; 11: 15-18; 14: 2, 3; 15: 3, 4; 19: 1-7.

### CHAPTER I

1 Dr. Phelps goes on to say, "Yet the greatest of these, that grace which above all else vitalizes a true hymn, is that which makes it true—its fidelity to the realities of religious experience."

2 "A hymn must have a beginning, middle, and end. There should be a manifest graduation in the thoughts, and their mutual dependence should be so perceptible that they could not be transposed without injuring the unity of the piece; every line carrying forward the connection, and every verse adding a well-proportioned limb to a symmetrical body. The reader should know when the strain is complete, and be satisfied, as at the close of an air in music." (James Montgomery.)

3 Dr. Parks, back in 1857, remarks: "That is not always the best church song which sparkles most with rhetorical gems. There are spangled hymns which will never excite devotional feeling."

4 Sung at President McKinley's funeral.

5 Greece never had a sacred book, she never had any symbols, any sacerdotal caste organized for the preservation of dogmas. Her poets and her artists were her true theologians. (Renan, in *Studies in Religious History*.)

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6 "Even when deeds and events of an innocent and pure character are thus sung, there is nothing more of spiritual worship in it than in the recitation of an epic poem. The singer confesses no need, asks no blessing, reveals no yearning, expects no response. There is no communion of thought and feeling, no aspiration for purity, no laying hold of moral strength." (Rev. G. O. Newport, a missionary in India, quoted in *The Hymn Lover*.)

### CHAPTER II

1 The instinct to use song in worship was recognized so long ago as 1695 by Dr. Hickman: "There never was any land so barbarous, or any people so polite, but have always approached their gods with the solemnity of music and have expressed their devotions with a song." (Quoted by Dr. A. S. Hoyt in his *Public Worship for Non-Liturgical Churches*.)

2 Our hymns spring out of religious experience at its best, and they tend to lift experience to its highest levels. The very cream of truth and of soul life is gathered into them. They contain the refined riches, the precious essences, the cut and polished jewels of Christianity in all ages. They are truly prophetic, the records of the insight and intuition and rapture of the seer and the saint." (Dr. Waldo S. Pratt, in *Musical Ministries*. [New York: Revell Co., 1915.] Used by permission.)

3 Henry Ward Beecher placed a high value on the song service of the church: "I have never loved men under any circumstances as I have loved them while singing with them; never at any other time have I been so near heaven with you, as in those hours when our songs were wafted thitherward."

4 "In all great religious movements the people have been inspired with a passion for singing. They have sung their creed: it seems the freest and most natural way of declaring their triumphant belief in great Christian truths, forgotten or denied in previous times of spiritual depression and now restored to their rightful place in the thought and life of the Church. Song has expressed and intensified their enthusiasm, their new faith, their new joy, their new determination to do the will of God." (Dr. W. R. DALE.)

5 Pratt, *Musical Ministries*.

6 Ephesians 5: 18-20.

7 Colossians 3: 16.

8 I Corinthians 14: 15.

9 Over three-quarters of a century ago, this lament was made by a prominent New England minister: "Many a man, who carefully interrogates his own experience, will confess that, while the voice of public prayer readily engages his attention and carries with it his devout desires, it is not so with the act of praise; that he very seldom finds his affections rising upon its notes to heaven—very seldom can he say at its close that he has worshiped God. The song has been wafted near him as a vehicle for conveying upward the sweet odor of a spiritual service, but the offering has been withheld, and the song ascends as empty of divine honors as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (Rev. Daniel L. Furber, in *Hymns and Choirs*.)

### CHAPTER III

1 "To get behind the hymnbook to the men and women who wrote its contents, and to the events, whether personal or public, out of which it sprang and which it so graciously mirrors, is to enter a world palpitating with human interest. For a hymnbook is a transcript of real life, a poetical accompaniment to real events and real experiences. Like all literature that counts,

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

it rises directly out of life." (Frederick J. Gillman, in *The Evolution of the English Hymn*. [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927.] Used by permission.)

2 J. Balcom Reeves, *The Hymn in History and Literature*. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1924). Used by permission.

3 "There is an inclination to fence in what are called 'literary lyrics,' as if to fence out singing lyrics! Now there is, of course, a distinction between poems meant to be sung and poems written in the pattern of lyrical poetry, but never meant to be sung; but the terminology which classes one kind as literary, thereby implying that the other kind is not of the realm of literature, is inaccurate and unhappy. *Ibid.*

4 "In his volume, *The English Lyric*, Professor Felix E. Schelling virtually disposes of the hymn with the remark that 'we may or may not "accept" certain hymns, but we do not have to read them. That is readily granted—unless, of course, one wishes to know them or to write just criticism about them.' *Ibid.*

5 "Frequently a hymn is a prayer; and it is a rule for the structure of prayers that they exclude all those recondite figures, dazzling comparisons, flashing metaphors, which, while grateful to certain minds of poetic excitability, are offensive to more sober and staid natures, and are not congenial with the lowly spirit of a suppliant at the throne of grace. A simile may be shining, but it may not be exactly chaste; and a hymn prefers pure beauty to bedizening ornament." (Dr. Edwards A. Park, in *Hymns and Choirs*.)

6 These numbers, of course, refer to the number of syllables in a line.

## CHAPTER IV

1 The vagaries of credit for writing given hymns is illustrated in the appearance of the intensely Calvinistic Toplady's name as the writer of Charles Wesley's intensely Arminian "Blow ye the trumpet, blow."

2 Those who care to make a fuller study of the revision of hymns than the following discussion affords are referred to the full treatment of the subject, and to the abundant cases cited, by Professor Edwards A. Park, D.D., of Andover Theological Seminary, in *Hymns and Choirs*, issued in 1860 by Drs. Austun Phelps, Edwards A. Park, and Daniel L. Furber. The lapse of years has in no way diminished the value of this volume. It is unfortunately out of print and inaccessible to the average pastor, outside of public libraries.

## CHAPTER V

1 "But the emotional life, strongest, no doubt, in youth, remains a lifelong element of personality and especially of the religious personality. Feeling is not merely an integral part of religious experience, it is central, vital, its inmost core. William James speaks of it as the deeper source of religion, and says that 'philosophical and theological formulas come below it in importance. It is the dynamic factor in the religious life. When it is absent, religion degenerates into mere formalism or barren intellectualism.'" (Gillman, in *The Evolution of the English Hymn*.)

2 Rev. Louis F. Benson, D.D., in *The Hymnody of the Christian Church*. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1927.) Used by permission.

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### CHAPTER VII

1 Dr. Harris says of his discovery, "The manuscript had been lying with a heap of other stray leaves of manuscript on the shelves of my library without awakening any suspicion that it contained a lost hymnbook of the early Church of the apostolic times, or at the very latest of the sub-apostolic times."

### CHAPTER VIII

1 There is frequent lament that in the translations of Greek, Latin, and German hymns into English much of the original beauty is lost. But the converse is also true: that such translators as Neale, Brownlie, and Palmer have taken the uncut diamonds of the Greek and Latin Fathers and so transformed them by their lapidarian skill that the world-wide Christian Church is rejoicing in their beauty.

2 The *Te Deum* has only slight claims to Greek origin and is postponed to a later chapter.

3 In like manner the rationalists of the age of Frederick the Great of Prussia sought to prevent the use of the Lutheran hymns; the Arians in the pre-Wesleyan times contended for the psalm versions without doxologies recognizing the Trinity; in our own day, extreme Modernists belittle Christian hymns as dogmatic and unpoetical and urge the use of sociological hymns.

4 This transfer of the song to clerical singers soon had its inevitable result. Jerome begins to be apprehensive that the form of singing would come to have too exclusive consideration. He complained that those who led the song, like comedians, "smoothed their throats with soft drinks in order to render their melodies more impressive, and that the heart alone can properly make melody to God.

### CHAPTER IX

1 "The Greek language lived long and died slowly, and the Christian hymn writers wrote in its decadence." (Rev. John Brownlie, in his preface to *Hymns of the Greek Church*.)

2 The canon is an elaborate service consisting of nine odes or hymns of different forms.

### CHAPTER X

1 "Jesus, the very thought of Thee" (Caswall) or "Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts" (Palmer).

2 "O sacred Head, now wounded," translated by James W. Alexander from Paul Gerhardt's "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," a German version of the Latin hymn above.

3 Imagine a poem of such length in the difficult "Leonine hexameter" of which the following translated lines will give an inkling:

"These are the latter times, these are not better times, let us stand waiting!  
Lo, how with awfulness, He, first in lawfulness, comes arbitrating."

Dr. Neale wisely reduced his centos to a plain meter, giving them practical usefulness.

4 Matthew Arnold described it as "the utterance of all that is exquisite in the spirit of its century." (Quoted by Gillman, in his *Evolution of the English Hymn*.)



## REFERENCES AND NOTES

### CHAPTER XI

1 As an indication of how prevalent this singing of religious hymns was, we note the fact that in 1512, twelve years before Luther's first hymnbook appeared, a collection of Roman Catholic hymns, set to profane tunes, was issued in Venice, Italy.

2 "To Luther belongs the extraordinary merit of having given to the German people in their own tongue the Bible, the Catechism, and the Hymnbook, so that God might speak directly to them in his Word, and that they might directly answer him in their songs." Dr. Philip Schaff adds elsewhere that Luther "is the father of the modern High German language and literature," and that these are the common possession of the Germanic tribes with their diversified dialects from the Adriatic to the Baltic Sea. Erasmus Alber, a contemporary who wrote twenty excellent hymns, calls Luther "the German Cicero, who not only reformed religion, but also the German language." Hans Sachs, the poet cobbler of Nuremberg, who, besides a great deal of general poetry, also wrote a number of hymns, styled Luther "the nightingale of Wittenberg."

### CHAPTER XII

1 Dr. Schaff.

### CHAPTER XIII

1 Dr. Louis F. Benson has well characterized this Psalter in its influence on French character: "The metrical Psalter made the Huguenot character. No doubt a character nourished on Old Testament ideals will lack the full symmetry of the Gospel. But the Huguenot was a warrior, first called to fight and suffer for his faith. And in singing psalms he found his confidence and strength. . . . In the wars of religion, the Psalms in meter were the songs of camp and march, the war cry on the field, the swan song at the martyr's stake."

2 "Of course, psalms in the ballad form were easily learned and kept in memory. And in the days when the ability to read was less general than now, these rhymes, scattered so freely broadcast, took root in many a mind and contributed powerfully to the righteousness and stability of the nation." (J. Balcom Reeves, in *The Hymn in History and Literature*.)

### CHAPTER XIV

1 Comparing the English church with the German, Horder exclaims: "The Puritans, indeed, had in their midst a finer poet than Luther, but they never introduced even Milton's superb renderings of certain of the Psalms into their worship. What a use Luther would have put Milton to, if he had been a member of his church! What songs he would have written! Aye, what music, too!"

2 "Thus the psalms have been at once an inspiration and a bondage: *an inspiration* in that they have kindled the fire which has produced the hymnody of the entire church; *a bondage*, because, by stereotyping religious expression, they robbed the heart of the right to express in its own words the fears, the joys, the hopes that the Divine Spirit had kindled in their souls." (W. Garrett Horder, in *The Hymn Lover*.)

3 Thomas Wright in his recent *Life of Isaac Watts* remarks: "Earlier in this

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work I referred to Watts' enthusiasm for, and his indebtedness to, John Mason, who deserves rather than any other writer the name of the Father of the Modern Hymn. If there had not been a Mason there would never have been a Watts."

### CHAPTER XV

1 It is perhaps needless to say that the word "vulgar" did not have the opprobrious connotation that it inevitably brings today. It simply meant "ordinary."

2 George W. Garrett Horder, in *The Hymn Lover*.

### CHAPTER XVI

1 "It was their love of social psalmody that made Methodist hymnody what it was, and it was the desire to better parochial psalmody that furnished John Wesley with the original motive of his work in hymnody." (Dr. Louis F. Benson, in *The English Hymn*. [New York: Harper and Bros.] Used by permission.)

2 "John Wesley was a good writer and preacher, and possessed extensive learning. He was a man of unfailing perseverance, great self-denial, large liberality, singular devotedness to his Master's service, and eminent piety. But perhaps his most remarkable gift was the power he possessed of making men willing to fall in with his purposes and of organizing systematic action for the benefit of his followers." (Josiah Miller, in *Singers and Songs of the Church*.)

3 "Wesley, like Watts, wrote very freely and spontaneously, as the thousands of lyrics he wrote bear witness. Not all of them were good; much of the verse reminds one of a painter's tentative sketches. But had he not freely written so many, he might not have written the smaller number so consummately well." (J. Balcom Reeves, in *The Hymn in History and Literature*.)

4 "The Wesley hymnbooks constitute an extraordinary interesting human document, palpitating with real life. Every event of those wonderful years, every experience, public or private, through which the singers passed, is mirrored in some sweet song. But there is more in them than that. They are *Pilgrim's Progress* in verse. They trace the religious life of every man as he travels from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. They unfold the spiritual drama of man, his hopes and fears, his aspirations and affections, his failures and victories; each chequered experience trembles into songs, and scarcely a note is missing. Springing from the heart of the eighteenth century, their music seems to drown its licentiousness and frivolity in paeans of praise." (Frederick J. Gillman, in *The Evolution of the English Hymn*.)

5 Charles Wesley's best hymns—and who would dare estimate his genius on any other basis?—meet John Drinkwater's two tests of vital poetry:

(1) It must spring from vital and intense personal experience.

(2) It must transfer to the reader by "pregnant and living words" the ecstasy that swelled the heart of the poet.

6 "The style of Watts is austere, objective, formal; the style of Wesley is warm, subjective, intimate." (J. Balcom Reeves, in *The Hymn in History and Literature*.)

7 Dr. Benson in his exhaustive treatise on *The English Hymn* remarks: "The Wesleys inaugurated a great spiritual revival; and their hymns did as much as any human agency to kindle and replenish its fervor. . . . John

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

Wesley led an ecclesiastical revolt and, failing to conquer his own church, established a new one of phenomenal proportions: the hymns prefigured the constitution of the new church and formed the manual of its spiritual discipline."

8 He frankly expressed his inhospitable attitude: "Were we to encourage little poets, we should soon be overrun."

### CHAPTER XVII

1 The Oxford or Tractarian Movement on the one hand sought a deeper spiritual life than was then prevalent, and on the other emphasized the solidarity of the Church of Christ before and after the Reformation. It recognized the authority of the pre-Reformation theology and of the associated ceremonial liturgy. Many of its leaders entered the Roman Catholic Church, accepting even its worship of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and of the saints.

### CHAPTER XVIII

1 The condition of congregational singing at this time is reported by Rev. Thomas Walter as follows: "Our tunes are left to the mercy of every unskilful throat to chop and alter, to twist and change, according to their infinitely diverse and no less odd humors and fancies. I have myself paused twice in one note to take breath. No two men in the congregation quaver alike or together; it sounds in the ears of a good judge like five hundred tunes roared out at the same time with perpetual interferences with one another."

2 It is related of a New England minister, Rev. T. Bellamy, that after the choir had outdone all its past discord and blundering in rendering the Psalm, he announced another and admonished his choir, "You must try again, for it is impossible to preach after such singing."

### CHAPTER XIX

1 Dr. S. Weir Mitchell.

2 Dr. Louis F. Benson says of Charles Wesley's "Jesus, lover of my soul": "The suspicion remains that the secret of its appeal lies in a poetic beauty that the average man feels without analyzing it, and in a perfection of craftsmanship that makes him want to sing it simply because it awakens the spirit of song in him, rather than a mood of reflection."

3 The Wesleyan doctrine of the Second Work, or Holiness, now known as "The Victorious Life."

4 It will be a good introduction to this minute study to work out the Biblical authority for the dozen or more allusions.

5 Hebrews 12: 1.

6 Fleming H. Revell Co. New York.

7 A full discussion of hymn tunes will be found in Chapters X to XII of *Music in Work and Worship* or in Chapters V to X in *Practical Church Music*, of which books the present writer is the author. Both published by Fleming H. Revell Co. New York.

### CHAPTER XX

1 A fuller discussion of this topic will be found in Chapter XXIX of *Music in Work and Worship*, by the present writer.

## *THE SINGING CHURCH*

2 When Moody was superintendent of a Sunday school in Chicago, he had a vicious boy in one of the classes whom he had reprimanded again and again for disturbing the meeting. Finally one Sunday the boy was unusually fractious and Moody turned to his chorister and said, "When I get up and walk up the aisle, you start 'Hold the Fort' as vigorously as you can." While the song was being sung with much enthusiasm, Moody dragged the boy out of the class by the collar, took him to an adjacent room, and punished him drastically while the school sang and submerged the boy's cries. The boy grew up, became a minister, and often told with glee the story of how Moody started the work of grace in his heart.

### CHAPTER XXII

1 In regular services, single verse tunes may be played through, but only the last half of double verse tunes should be allowed, lest the momentum gained by the introductory comment be lost.

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